

Gayness and Homosexuality: Issues for the Church

THE GAY CAUCUSES now active in virtually every major American denomination no longer will let any of us forget that the church must face this issue more openly, honestly, and sensitively than it has yet done.¹ Beyond the legitimate pressure which the caucuses are exerting, there are numerous compelling reasons for the church to reexamine its theology and practice.² Among them are these:

- Gay Christians are sisters and brothers of every other Christian, and a great many are earnestly seeking the church's full acceptance of them—without prejudice on the basis of sexual orientation.

- While antihomosexual bias has long existed in Western culture generally, the church must take responsibility for its significant share in shaping, supporting, and transmitting negative (and often hostile) attitudes toward gay people.

- The Christian mandate to seek social justice will not let us forget that discrimination continues against millions of gay people

in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, basic civil liberties—and in church structures.³

- The church must do its ongoing theological and ethical work with a high sense of responsibility. Fresh insights from gay Christians, from feminist theologians, and from those secular scholars who frequently manifest God's "common grace" in the world remind us of the numerous ways our particular sexual conditionings have colored our perceptions of God's nature and presence among us. If the Protestant Principle warns us against absolutizing historically relative theological and ethical judgments, so also an openness to continuing revelation should convince us (as it did some of our ancestors-in-faith) that "the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth."

- Finally, the heterosexually-oriented majority in the church has an immense amount to gain from a deeper grappling with this issue and a deeper encounter with gay Christians: an enriched capacity to love other human beings more fully and less fearfully, and a more faithful response to God's will for social justice.

The Bible and Homosexuality

It is a curious but unmistakable phenomenon that a great many Christians treat so literally the references to homosexual practice in the Bible, while at the same time they interpret biblical texts on almost every other topic with considerable flexibility and non-literality. Why this may be so is an important question, and we shall return to it later. But at this point the major texts which mention the subject engage our attention.

A brief survey of these passages needs to be prefaced with a word about interpretive principles.⁴ Let me suggest four. First and most fundamental, Jesus Christ is the bearer of God's invitation to human wholeness and communion. Jesus Christ is the focal point of God's humanizing action, and hence he is the central norm through which and by which everything else in Scripture should be judged. Second, the interpreter must take seriously both the historical context of the biblical writers and our present cultural situation. Third, we should study and interpret the Bible with

awareness of the cultural relativity in which we ourselves are immersed, and through which we perceive and experience what Christian faith means. Finally, our scriptural interpretation should be informed by the revelations of God's truth in other disciplines of human inquiry.

Nowhere does the Bible say anything about homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Its references to the subject are—without exception—statements about certain kinds of homosexual acts. Our understanding of homosexuality as a psychosexual orientation is a relatively recent development. It is crucial to remember this, for in all probability the biblical writers in each instance were speaking of homosexual acts undertaken by persons whom the authors presumed to be heterosexually constituted.⁵

Even though it does not deal with homosexual activity, it is well to begin with the Onan story (Genesis 38:1-11), for it has significantly influenced attitudes toward this subject. Onan's refusal to impregnate his widowed sister-in-law—a refusal expressed through his deliberate withdrawal before ejaculation (*coitus interruptus*)—was seen by the writer as so serious a violation of divine decree that Onan was killed by Yahweh.

Three interpretive observations are particularly relevant to the subject of homosexuality. First, the Onan story clearly points up the strong emphasis upon procreation which is characteristic of the Hebrew interpretation of sexuality. The historical context is one in which a small tribe was struggling for its very survival, and thus the reproduction of children was of exceptional importance. Any sexual activity that "wasted the seed" was a threat to the tribe. Our own situation on an overcrowded planet is markedly different.

The second observation is linked to this, and I repeat this point made in earlier chapters. The Onan story illustrates a biological misunderstanding which is present throughout the Bible. The prescientific mind (particularly the prescientific male mind) assumed that the man's semen contained the whole of nascent life. With no knowledge of eggs and ovulation, it was assumed that the woman provided only the incubating space. Hence, the deliberate and non-procreative spilling of semen was equivalent to the deliberate destruction of human life. Whether it occurred in *coitus interruptus* (as with Onan), or in male homosexual acts, or for that matter in

male masturbation, the deserved judgment was as severe as that for abortion or even murder.

The third observation follows: male homosexual and masturbatory acts have been condemned far more vigorously than have similar female acts throughout the whole sweep of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The sexism endemic to a patriarchal society ironically bore with its logic a heavier burden upon the "deviants" of the "superior" gender. But the central irony of the Onan story interpretation through the centuries is this: its major point does not concern sexual sin as such but rather has to do with human greed (over property inheritance) and with the disobedience of God's commands.

However, it is another Genesis account which has emerged as the chief text in Christian history for the summary condemnation of homosexuality: Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29). Traditional explanation has held that the destruction of the two cities is the positive sign of God's utter disapproval of homosexuality. Yet, there are compelling reasons to doubt the accuracy of this interpretation. Current Old Testament scholarship generally holds that the story's major themes are the affront to God's will in the breach of ancient Hebrew hospitality norms and persistent violations of rudimentary social justice.⁶

There are multiple reasons for preferring the latter interpretation. For one, some scholars doubt that the verb "to know" (*yādāh*) in this story refers to sexual intercourse. More probably it means the crowd's rude insistence upon knowing who these two strangers were. Lot, in their eyes, was not properly qualified to offer hospitality to strangers inasmuch as he himself was an outsider, a resident alien in Sodom.

That inhospitality and injustice coming from the mob and generally characterizing the community were "the sin of Sodom" is plausible when one examines parallel scriptural accounts (e.g., the crime of Gibeah, Judges 19:1-21:25). Even weightier evidence comes from subsequent Old Testament references to Sodom, none of which identifies homosexuality with that city. Ezekiel is typical: "Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters lived in pride, plenty, and thoughtless ease; they supported not the poor and needy; they grew haughty, and committed abomina-

tion before me; so I swept them away; as you have seen" (Ezekiel 16:49-50). The other Old Testament references to Sodom's sin are similar (cf. Isaiah 13:19; Jeremiah 49:18, 50:40), and the identification of Sodom with inhospitality is made by Jesus as well (Luke 10:10-13). It was not until several centuries after it was written that the Sodom story was given a dominantly sexual interpretation—in the intertestamental Book of Jubilees and then in two late New Testament texts (2 Peter 2:4-10 and Jude 6-7). But if Sodom had consistently been understood as the major symbol of divine judgment on homosexual acts, we would expect that the other biblical references to such acts would also mention Sodom and its fate. None does.

Though there is considerable agreement among scholars that the basic ethical theme of the Sodom account is that of justice and its basic theological theme is God's righteousness in the face of social guilt, we can still acknowledge the possibility that homosexual acts did play some role in the story.⁷ If the verb "to know" does signify homosexual intercourse, it is also patently clear that what is being threatened here is homosexual *rape*. Moreover, the men of Sodom have threatened to rape the two visiting *angels*, and since the angels represent Yahweh's presence there is a direct sin against God here portrayed. In all fairness to the text, it is extremely difficult to construe this account as a judgment against *all* homosexual activity.

Fr. John McNeill writes a fitting conclusion to our brief look at the Sodom story. Observing that its dominant use in Christianity may well be one of the supreme ironies of history, he says: "For thousands of years in the Christian West the homosexual has been the victim of inhospitable treatment. Condemned by the Church, he has been the victim of persecution, torture, and even death. In the name of a mistaken understanding of Sodom and Gomorrah, the true crime of Sodom and Gomorrah has been and continues to be repeated every day."⁸

If the dominant homosexual interpretation traditionally given to the Sodom account fails to stand up to critical examination, there are, nevertheless, several other Old Testament passages which unmistakably condemn homosexual acts. It is crucial to see in these, however, that the pervasive theme is that of cultic defilement and idolatry. There is no general condemnation of same-sex *orientation*

(a notion foreign to the writers), nor is there any reference to genital *love* between gay persons who are committed to each other. What is clear is that sacral male prostitution is anathematized, for it involves the cultic worship of foreign gods and denies Yahweh's exclusive claim (see Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46).

Cultic defilement is also the context for the Holiness Code in Leviticus (see 18:22 and 20:13).⁹ Canaanite fertility worship involved sacral prostitution and sexual orgies, and this constituted a direct threat to Yahweh's exclusive claim. For Yahweh was the One who worked through the freedom of human history and not, primarily, through the cycles of biological life. If so, sexuality was not to be seen as a mysterious sacred power, but rather as part of human life to be used responsibly in gratitude to the Creator—a basic perspective of continuing relevance.

For those who do not accept this as the more appropriate interpretation of the Leviticus references, some exceedingly difficult issues of biblical interpretation emerge.¹⁰ What is the principle of selection by which cultic injunctions against homosexual acts are held valid today but at the same time most other parts of the Holiness Code are deemed irrelevant? Should the death penalty be used against male homosexuals as the law stipulates? Why are female same-sex acts unmentioned? What is the link between female subordination and the fear of male homosexuality, both evident in these laws? And how shall a church which grounds its life in the grace of Jesus Christ deal with the law codes of ancient Israel?

Part of the Old Testament context for this issue, worthy of note, was a common Middle East practice in that day: the submission of captured male foes to anal rape. It was an expression of domination and contempt, a powerful symbol of scorn in societies where the dignity of the male was held in such high esteem. Here a man was using another *man* as he might use a woman. As long as homosexual activity of any sort had this connection, it is not difficult to understand some of these texts.

Nevertheless, at a number of points in the Old Testament there are beautiful affirmations of same-sex *love*. Two notable examples come to mind. David's love for Jonathan was said to exceed his love for women. And the relationship of Ruth and Naomi can only

be described as a bond of deep love. There is no indication that there was genital expression in either of these. The point is simply that in these instances, deeply and emotionally expressed love between two persons of the same sex is affirmed. Indeed, the accounts suggest that it is something of a cause for celebration.

In the New Testament we have no record of any words of Jesus about homosexuality either as an orientation or as a genital expression. The major New Testament references are found in two Pauline letters and in 1 Timothy.

Paul's statement in Romans 1:18-32 traditionally has been taken as the strongest New Testament rejection of homosexuality, yet this passage deserves more careful examination that is often accorded to it. The writer is clearly concerned about the influence of paganism on the Roman Christians, and he had good reason to be. The moral climate of Hellenistic Rome was marred by various forms of sexual commerce and exploitation. Yet, in this passage while Paul sees homosexual acts as a *result* of idolatry, he does not claim that they are the *cause* of divine wrath. Idolatry clearly is the major issue at stake. Further, when Paul uses the word "nature" he "apparently refers only to homosexual acts indulged in by those he considered to be otherwise heterosexually inclined; acts which represent a voluntary choice to act contrary to their ordinary sexual appetite."¹¹ Thus, he speaks of homosexual acts as those in which people are "leaving," "giving up," or "exchanging" their regular sexual orientations. It is difficult to read into Paul's words at this point the modern psychosexual understanding of the gay person as one whose orientation is fixed very early in life and for whom "natural" (heterosexual) relations would be felt as basically contrary to his or her own sexual constitution, and might well be impossible at that. In addition, in this passage we are given a description of homosexual *lust* ("consumed with passion for one another"), but hardly an account of interpersonal same-sex love—about which Paul does not speak.

Thus, it is difficult to construe Paul's statement as applicable to acts of committed love engaged in by persons for whom same-sex attraction is part of the givenness of *their* "nature." In point of fact, Paul uses the word "nature" in his writings as a flexible concept, expressing varying concerns in different contexts. An ethical position

which condemns homosexuality as a violation of natural law will have to turn to non-biblical philosophical materials for its justification—the Pauline material will not sustain it.¹²

Finally it is worth noting that in this entire section of the letter to the Romans the author's concern is to demonstrate that all persons are under the power of sin. They cannot extricate themselves from it through meritorious works of the law. In spite of his own moral judgments, Paul reveals this basic point in Romans 2:1. There he declares that those who pass judgment on others (for the various acts which he has earlier mentioned) are no better off. They condemn themselves because they stand under the same power of sin. And in Romans 3:21-25 comes the central premise of these first chapters of the letter: all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and all who open themselves in faith are justified by God's grace in Jesus Christ.

The point of all this is not that Paul sees homosexual acts as neutral or, much less, that he looks upon any such acts with favor. Clearly, he does not. He understands homosexual practices to be the result of idolatry. But, as David L. Bartlett has observed, Paul's argument here is not "purely" theological. It is partly based on his interpretation of Old Testament concepts of idolatry, partly based on the common wisdom of his day, and partly based on his own empirical understanding of homosexuality's nature and consequences. In regard to the latter, he looked at the Gentile world and saw idolatry but also saw homosexual practices and the prevalence of venereal disease—and he linked them firmly together. As Bartlett comments, to be genuinely "Pauline" in our understanding of homosexual practices today, we would have to demonstrate that there does indeed exist a clear connection between idolatry and homosexual acts—and then one would wonder, given the widespread idolatry of our times, why more people had not been so "punished." In addition, a Pauline methodology would have us discuss homosexuality today with our best biblical interpretation, our best common wisdom of the contemporary day, and the best empirical understandings we can find. "If our understanding of homosexuality and our empirical perception of its nature and consequences have changed, then we will not be able to understand the issue precisely as Paul did, even if we share Paul's reverence for the Old Testa-

ment, his abhorrence of idolatry, and his conviction that we are all sinners saved by grace through faith.”¹³

Paul's other reference to homosexual acts (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) is similar to that of the writer of 1 Timothy (1:8-11). Both passages contain lists of practices which will exclude people from the kingdom. They are acts which dishonor God and harm the neighbor, including such things as thievery, drunkenness, kidnapping, and lying. Homosexual acts are not singled out for special censure, but they are unmistakably part of the list. What then should we make of Paul's moral judgment in this case? Perhaps we should just accept him for what he was: a faithful apostle and a profound interpreter of the central message of the gospel, yet one who was also a fallible and historically-conditioned human being. Paul's central message is clear: we do not earn righteousness by anything we do nor are we justified by anything we are—we are justified by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and the gifts of the Spirit are equally available to all persons. If the norm of the new humanity in Jesus Christ together with our best current moral wisdom and empirical knowledge would cause us to question some of Paul's moral convictions about the status of women and about the institution of human slavery, surely his moral judgments about homosexual acts ought not be exempt.

The central biblical message regarding sexuality seems clear enough. Like every other good gift, it can be misused. The idolatrous dishonoring of God inevitably results in the dishonoring of persons, and faithfulness to God will result in sexual expression which honors the personhood of the other. Our sexuality is not a mysterious and alien force of nature but part of what it means to be human. It is a power to be integrated fully into one's selfhood and to be used in the service of love. That message, I am convinced, applies regardless of one's affectional orientation.

The Range of Contemporary Theological Opinion

Four theological stances toward homosexuality represent the range of current conviction.¹⁴ The first can be called a rejecting-punitive orientation. The person who holds this unconditionally rejects homosexuality as Christianly legitimate and, at the same time, bears a punitive attitude toward gay persons.

The rejecting-punitive motif, tragically enough, is a strong one in Christian history. If we have been ignorant of the persecutions, it is not without reason. Unlike the recognized histories of other minority groups, there has been no "gay history." Heterosexual historians usually have considered the subject unmentionable, and gay historians have been constrained by the fear of ceasing to be invisible. A conspiracy of silence has resulted. Yet, the facts are there. For many centuries stoning, burning, sexual mutilation, and the death penalty were fairly common treatments for discovered homosexuals. While the church frequently gave its blessings to the civil persecutions, official ecclesiastical practice tended to be less physically violent. Nevertheless, spiritually it was even more severe, for it usually meant refusal of the sacraments and ostracism from the common life.¹⁵

Today no major contemporary theologian holds the rejecting-punitive position and most church bodies in their formal statements have moved away from it. Yet in practice it may still be by far the most common orientation throughout the length and breadth of the church in our society. Its theology rests on a selective biblical literalism—selective, again, because other moral issues are not treated with the same kind of literalism at all. Its punitive attitudes might be expressed less violently than was typical in the past, but they are still highly punitive and ostracizing.¹⁶ The attitudes are rooted in familiar stereotypes: all lesbians are tough and all male gays effeminate; homosexuals are compulsive and sex-hungry; they are by nature promiscuous; male gays have an inherent tendency toward child molestation. Each of these stereotypes has been thoroughly discounted by reliable research, and yet they persist in the minds of countless Christians. And the key criticism of this whole orientation—beyond its untenable biblical interpretations—must be the incongruity of a vindictive stance with the gospel.

The *rejecting-nonpunitive* position must be considered more fully. No less a theologian than Karl Barth represents this view. Since humanity is always "fellow-humanity," Barth argues, men and women come into its fullness only in relation to persons of the opposite sex. To seek one's humanity in a person of the same sex is to seek "a substitute for the despised partner," and this is "physi-

cal, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay.”¹⁷ Moreover, this is idolatry. One who seeks same-sex union is simply seeking oneself in a quest for self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency. Hence, homosexuality is unnatural and violates the command of the Creator. But, Barth hastens to add, the central theme of the gospel is God’s overwhelming grace in Jesus Christ. *Homosexuality* must be condemned, but in light of grace the homosexual *person* must not.

If Barth’s arguments emphasize that there is something inherently wrong with the homosexual condition as such (it is idolatrous, a sickness and a perversion), the rejecting-nonpunitive position can also be argued on more consequentialist grounds. William Muehl does this.¹⁸ Muehl clearly recognizes the cruelty, injustice, and hypocrisy all present in the persecution and prosecution of gay persons. He fully supports the church’s obligation toward their civil liberties. Theirs, he believes, is not the only form of sexual irresponsibility, but it is irresponsibility which cannot be approved by Christian conscience. Human dignity is threatened by gay relationships. Homosexuality is an illness comparable to alcoholism, and sheer acceptance of it would have “implications for our view of marriage, the limitations appropriate to sexual activity, the raising of children, and the structure of the family.” Since we are relatively ignorant concerning such potentially grave social results, Muehl argues, we should respect the historic position of the church, which rejects homosexuality.

The rejecting-nonpunitive stance appears to rest upon two major arguments and upon two major unspoken assumptions, each of which is open to serious question. The first argument is that of natural law and idolatry. At this point we return to Barth. Barth seems to forget our human historicity, apparently assuming that human nature is an unchangeable, once-and-for-all essence given by the Creator. Actually, our human nature is shaped in some significant part by the interaction of people in specific periods of time with specific cultural symbols and historic environments. In fact, the notion of a fixed human nature is highly questionable from a biblical point of view. “Where we read ‘created’ in our Bibles, the tense in the Hebrew is often in fact the continuous present, i.e. God is ‘creating.’ And from this understanding comes a statement

that may be held to give us our vocation as ‘being created in the image of God’ . . . ”¹⁹

Committed to human historicity, Gregory Baum fittingly declares, “In other words, human nature as it is at present is not normative for theologians. . . . What is normative for normal life is the human nature to which we are divinely summoned, which is defined in terms of mutuality. This, at least, is the promise of biblical religion.” After examining the evidence of mutual fulfillment in committed gay couples, Fr. Baum concludes, “Homosexual love, then, is not contrary to human nature, defined in terms of mutuality toward which mankind is summoned.”²⁰

In addition, Barth’s claim that homosexuality is idolatrous rests on questionable assumptions which I have earlier touched upon—the norm of procreative sex and the notion of essential gender complementarity. Regarding the first, Barth (like Paul Ramsey) affirms responsible family planning, but contends that even if every sex act is not procreative, all sexual relations must be oriented to that possibility. On one level it can be countered that while responsible love and sexual expression ought not to be sundered, procreation (even the procreative possibility) and sex ought not to be irrevocably joined. “Be fruitful and multiply” has now overfilled the earth. On another level it can also be argued that the possibility of procreation has not consistently been insisted upon by Christian orthodoxy, as witness the validity of the marriage between a man and a woman, one of whom is known to be irreversibly sterile.

What of the notion of essential gender complementarity? Barth claims that there is no “fellow humanity” apart from the covenanted relationship with one of the opposite sex. But it is more theologically defensible to affirm that there is no genuine humanity apart from *relationship* and *community*. To insist that the relationship which constitutes the image of God must be heterosexual assumes that the psychic natures of women and men are somehow biologically-given and ontologically unchangeable. Rosemary Ruether speaks vigorously to this point: “Such a concept of complementarity depends on a sadomasochistic concept of male and female relations. It covertly demands the continued dependency and underdevelopment of woman in order to validate the thesis that two kinds of personalities exist by nature in males and females and

which are each partial expressions of some larger whole. Such a view can allow neither men nor women to be whole persons who can develop both their active and their affective sides."²¹

Still another contention of Barth's position is that homosexuality means a "despising" of the other sex. But this lacks both logical and factual foundation. It equates an aversion to intercourse with an aversion to persons. Actually, many gay people exhibit the ability to establish particularly meaningful and loving relationships with members of the opposite sex precisely because sexual "conquest" in whatever form is excluded from the situation. Moreover, current research indicates the widespread amount of antipathy between persons of the *opposite* sex because of the dominance-submission patterns engrained in our sex-role stereotyping.²² Indeed, the logic of Barth's argument would seem to be that *heterosexuals* by *their* very nature should despise members of their own sex—an unsupportable assumption.

And finally, Barth maintains that homosexuality is idolatrous because it is basically self-worship and narcissism: the gay person is just loving in the other the reflection of the self. But this claim does grave injustice to both the uniqueness of persons and the capacities which gay people amply demonstrate for self-giving love. When a person in a committed relationship deeply loves another of the same sex, it is difficult to understand how this can be construed as self-love—except if one adopts an untenable "biologism" about human relatedness and ignores the unity of the body-self.

We return to Muehl to examine the second major argument of the rejecting-nonpunitive position; that undesirable social consequences most likely would result from homosexuality's acceptance. Underneath Muehl's fears for the future of the family seems to lie the unspoken conviction that the church's approval of same-sex orientation would bring in its wake a significant increase in numbers of those choosing to be gay. But this is highly unlikely. Research shows no demonstrable increase in homosexual behavior in the quarter century since Kinsey's study in spite of some lessening of punitive attitudes in recent years.²³ Indeed, if one's dominant sexual orientation is, for the great majority, not a matter of conscious choice, this is quite understandable. It may be the case that some heterosexual people, perhaps quite unconsciously, assume

that there is something so attractive in the gay experience that if it were not stringently forbidden many others would choose this orientation.

The great majority of gay persons do not appear to have any more choice about their affectional orientation than do the great majority of heterosexuals. There is no general agreement about the causes of homosexuality. Major theories cluster around two different approaches, the psychogenic and the genetic, but both remain in dispute.²⁴ Some researchers are now admitting that when we know more about the causes of heterosexuality (about which we know precious little at present) then we shall also know more about the causes of homosexuality. At least one thing is increasingly clear, however: sexual orientation is relatively fixed by early childhood through processes about which the individual makes no conscious choice.

If sexual orientation for the great majority of heterosexuals and gay persons is not freely chosen, neither is it easily reversed. Positive therapeutic results in that minority of gay people who have sought treatment to reverse their orientation have been minimal. One study contends that there are actually no validated instances of successful sexual preference reorientation through therapy.²⁵ Behavioral modification programs using "aversive therapy" have been able to condition some gays against attraction to their own sex but have been notably unable to replace that with similar attraction to the opposite sex. In 1975 the therapist who had developed and popularized the orgasmic reorientation technique disavowed his own treatment and called upon other behavioral therapists to cease, because such attempts were proving harmful to the subjects' whole personality structures—a particularly dehumanizing result.²⁶

The adverse social consequences argument also hinges upon the assumption that gay people are inherently less capable of interpersonal and social functioning than are heterosexuals. It is significant, however, that in 1974 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, saying "homosexuality *per se* implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities." Those clinicians who have attributed personality problems to gays *because* of their sexual orientation usually have drawn their observations from their own

patients without recognizing or admitting that their heterosexual patients *also* have personality problems—and that is why they have come for therapy. The best comparative study to date remains that of Evelyn Hooker who found that when batteries of personality tests were administered to samples of male heterosexuals and male gays, neither group of which was in therapy, the clinical psychologists evaluating the test results could neither distinguish sexual orientation nor find “demonstrable pathology” among those later identified as homosexually-oriented.²⁷ “Neurotic” traits typically ascribed to gay persons are essentially the same for members of any oppressed minority group, and in cultures where homosexual behavior has been fully accepted such traits do not discernibly appear.²⁸

Harmful consequences for the institution of family life is another fear expressed in this position. Even if gay persons were no less prone to emotional instability because of their sexual orientation, if society endorses same-sex coupling what will happen to the concept of the Christian family? Thus, Muehl asks, “Can the battered institution of Christian marriage stand the sight of gay unions being solemnized at the altar?”²⁹

It is likely, however, that gay acceptance would actually bring constructive family consequences. There are several reasons for this. At present a fair number of marital difficulties and divorces stem from the fact that one of the spouses is primarily homosexual in orientation and has been pushed into marriage by social expectations and by the desire to escape detection. One priest who serves as a canon lawyer in a Catholic marriage tribunal contends that in over a third of the divorces with which he has dealt, one of the partners was homosexually inclined, a fact of major disruption for the marriage.³⁰ It seems highly probable in this regard that marital stability would be well served if heterosexual union were not viewed as the only avenue to respectability.

Other beneficial results for family life can be foreseen as well. Greater acceptance of homosexuality is likely to ease the current pressures toward the heterosexual's living up to rigid sex-role stereotypes. The acting out of such stereotypes when they are not authentic to one's unique personality is predictably a major factor in marital difficulties. Moreover, emotional intimacy between heterosexual family members of the same gender is likely to be enhanced. Such

intimacy—between father and son, for example—too often is still inhibited by unrecognized homosexual fears. And, of no minor importance, the syndromes of alienation and rejection within families when a child is discovered to be gay would be ameliorated. Speaking to this point, Peggy Way writes out of an extensive counseling experience with gay people and their families: “I feel terrible sadness and pathos over the beautiful ‘children’ many parents are missing because sexuality gets in the way. All the rich humanness, spirituality, commitment, kindness I get to enjoy and share is lost to parents who cannot deal with the homosexuality of their own children, regardless of their other fine qualities.”³¹ In short, the picture of invidious consequences to family life from gay acceptance is highly overdrawn. In fact, the greater likelihood is quite the other way around: there are positive benefits to be foreseen.

Positive benefits more than negative consequences can also be foreseen for society as a whole. Societal health is always integrally related to social justice, and justice is served when discrimination against minority groups on the basis of unfair stereotypes is mitigated. Justice is also served when violence and the more destructive forms of competition are mitigated, and our attempt to understand the exaggerated aggressiveness of many male heterosexuals must take seriously the presence of conscious and unconscious fears of homosexuality. In a difficult-to-measure but predictable way, society would also benefit from the creative energies released in countless gay people, were they to be fully accepted. At present, closeted gays time and again report the daily energy drain inevitable for one forced to live a double life. If of a different sort, the drain on the personal resources of publicly-avowed gays is surely no less. Society presses them to make their homosexual orientation central to their identities, coerces them into spending time and energy defending their acceptability, and then through its various door-closing discriminations deprives itself of their best talents. Once again, not only is the case for harmful social consequences difficult to demonstrate, but the more persuasive arguments lie on the side of social benefit.

There is a basic flaw which underlies the entire rejecting-nonpunitive position: the assumption that it is possible to reject the homosexual orientation as such and still be nonpunitive toward gays

as persons. Further comment on this is warranted, but I shall do so in the context of the next position.

Qualified acceptance might be the term for a third theological option regarding homosexuality. Helmut Thielicke is its best example, and his argument follows several steps. Similar to Barth, Thielicke first argues, "The fundamental order of creation and the created determination of the two sexes make it appear justifiable to speak of homosexuality as a 'perversion' . . . [which] is in every case *not* in accord with the order of creation."³² But Thielicke is more open to contemporary psychological and medical research on the subject. Hence, he takes a second step: "But now experience shows that constitutional homosexuality at any rate is largely unsusceptible to medical or psychotherapeutic treatment, at least so far as achieving the desired goal of a fundamental conversion to normality is concerned."³³ Further, he says, homosexuality as a *predisposition* ought not to be depreciated any more than the varied distortions of the created order in which all fallen people share.

But what about genital expression? If a gay person can change in sexual orientation, such change should actively be sought. Admittedly, however, most cannot. Then, Thielicke contends, such persons should seek to sublimate their homosexual desires and not act on them. But some constitutional homosexuals "because of their vitality" are not able to practice abstinence. If that is the case, they should structure their sexual relationships "in an ethically responsible way" (in adult, fully-committed relationships). They should make the best of their painful situations without idealizing them or pretending that they are normal.

Thielicke's argument is important. For one thing, it is more empirically informed than the rejecting-nonpunitive position. Further, this argument now represents the position of a number of church leaders and several recent denominational statements on the issue. But the argument still is unacceptable, in my judgment. This position, like Barth's, is grounded in an essentially nonhistoricist, rigid version of natural law. And, in spite of its greater humanness, the position becomes self-contradictory. In effect, the gay person is told, "We heterosexual Christians sympathize with your plight,

and if you *must* give genital expression to your orientation you must do it in a morally responsible way—but do not forget that you are a sinner *because of your sexual orientation* and do not deny that you are a sexual pervert."

An ethics of the gospel ought never forget that the capacity for moral responsibility is intrinsically related to self-acceptance which, in turn, depends on one's acceptance by others and, ultimately, by God. Gay persons frequently have been told by their families that they do not belong to them, by the church that they are desperate sinners because of their affectional orientation, by medical doctors that they are sick, and by the law that they are criminals. In the face of this onslaught, it is amazing that so many are emotionally stable and sexually responsible. If loneliness, self-doubt, depression, and promiscuity do have a higher incidence among gays, it is fully understandable. Then we should cut through the vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy and strike at the root of the problem—social oppression. Thielicke fails to do this. More liberal though his position might be, by continuing to label same-sex orientation as a perversion of God's natural law, he encourages the continuation of punitive attitudes toward gays. If it be argued that we can reject the sin without rejecting the sinner, the question must be asked, but what if the so-called "sin" is as much a part of the person as the color of the skin? The upshot of it all is that Thielicke's position effectively undermines its own hopes for responsible and faithful sexual relationships.

The fourth major theological possibility is *full acceptance*. Those who affirm this position most often make the assumption that the homosexual orientation is more of a given than a free choice. More fundamentally, however, this position rests on the conviction that same-sex relationships can richly express and be the vehicle of God's humanizing intentions.

Though still in a minority, the advocates of full acceptance are increasing in number. In 1963 the English Friends stated in their widely-read *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*, "One should no more deplore 'homosexuality' than left-handedness. . . . Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and therefore we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse."³⁴ From

the Catholic side, in 1976 Fr. John McNeill published his impressive case for gay acceptance, *The Church and the Homosexual*. Among other issues, emphasizing the positive contributions which homosexual acceptance can make to church and society, he contends, "The objective acceptance of the homosexual community will potentially leave both communities (homosexual and heterosexual) free from the need to conform to narrow stereotypes, and positively free to develop all the qualities that belong to the fullness of the human personality."³⁵

Among theologians it has been Norman Pittenger, however, who has articulated the full acceptance position most persistently over the years.³⁶ God, he affirms, is the "Cosmic Lover," ceaselessly and unfaithfully in action as love, and manifested supremely in Jesus Christ. God's abiding purpose for humankind is that in response to divine action we should realize our intended humanity as human lovers—in the richest, broadest, and most responsible sense of the term. Our embodied sexuality is the physiological and psychological base for our capacity to love.

For all of its continuity with animal sexuality, human sexuality is different, continues Pittenger. As persons our sexuality means the possibility of expressing and sharing a total personal relationship in love, a relationship which contributes immeasurably toward our intended destiny. Hence, abnormality or deviance should not be defined statistically, but rather in reference to the norm of humanity in Jesus Christ. Gay persons desire and need deep and lasting relationships just as do heterosexuals, and appropriate genital expression should be denied to neither.

Thus, the ethical question which Pittenger poses is this: what sexual behavior will serve and enhance, rather than inhibit, damage, or destroy the fuller realization of our divinely-intended humanity? The answer is sexual behavior in accord with an ethics of love. This means commitment and trust, tenderness, respect for the other, and the desire for ongoing and responsible communion with the other. On the negative side, an ethics of love mandates against selfish sexual expression, cruelty, impersonal sex, obsession with sex, and against actions done without willingness to take responsibility for the consequences. Such an ethics always asks about the meanings of acts in their total context—in the relationship itself, in society,

and in regard to God's intended direction for human life. Such an ethics of sexual love is equally appropriate to heterosexual and gay Christians. There is no double standard.

Further Reflections

Reinhold Niebuhr argued that Christians must learn to live with the tension of "having and not having the truth."³⁷ "Tolerance" in its truest sense, he maintained, comes when we can have vital convictions which lead to committed actions and, at the same time, recognize that our own "truth" is always incomplete and subject to distortion. Living with convictions we also then live within the reality of divine forgiveness and with respect for the convictions of those who sincerely differ from us. That spirit is always essential, I believe, but when we confront issues like homosexuality on which feelings are particularly deep and divided, it is especially crucial.

At various times I have felt the force of each of the first three stances which I have described, beginning as a teenager with the full complement of anti-gay stereotypes and prejudices. Having moved somewhat later into the rejecting-non-punitive and then the qualified acceptance positions, several personal friendships with remarkable gay Christian people jarred me into further reflection. I came to believe that nothing less than full Christian acceptance of homosexuality and of its responsible genital expression adequately represented the direction of both gospel and contemporary research. While full acceptance means a rather sharp turning from the majority opinion in the Christian moral tradition about homosexuality, I am convinced that it does not mean an *ethical* change from the central thrust of the gospel. Rather, it means its fuller implementation.

There are times when we must challenge specific moral traditions of our heritage in the light of new empirical knowledge, new experience, and God's on-going revelation. Our ancestors-in-faith did not know what we now know about homosexuality as a psychosexual orientation, nor can we blame them for being persons of their own historical time. And the dependence of early Christians on certain cultural traditions prevented them (on this issue as on some other moral matters) from seeing some of the implications

of that gospel to which they were sincerely committed. We ought neither blame them nor pretend that we have the full truth. Our judgments—whatever they may be—are conditioned and imperfect. But we do have some insights about homosexuality now that they did not have access to, and it would be unfaithful not to use the best lights that we have.³⁸

We have little definitive knowledge about the causes of homosexuality, however—or of heterosexuality, for that matter.³⁹ We do know that homosexuality is extraordinarily difficult to define as a coherent phenomenon, simply because gay people like heterosexuals are diverse and unique. They differ in behavior and feelings, in levels of sexual interest, in roles and ways of lovemaking, in the amount of genital activity, in attitudes about their own and others' homosexuality, in the extent to which they are open or covert about their orientation. This conclusion from the Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University bears emphasis: "Our data appear to indicate that homosexuality involves a large number of widely divergent experiences—developmental, sexual, social, and psychological—and that even after a person has been labeled 'homosexual' on the basis of his or her preferred sexual object choice, there is little that can be predicted about the person on the basis of that label."⁴⁰ One thing, I would add, can be predicted, however, precisely because it is common to all human beings: gay persons desire and seek meaning and wholeness in and through their sexuality, and their sexuality is for them (as for anyone else) of intrinsic importance to their capacity for any kind of human love.

This chapter's emphasis thus far has been upon one of the two directions appropriate to sexual theology: the movement from Christian faith to sexuality. But we need also to make inquiry in the other direction as well, asking how our own experience as sexual persons tends to give shape to our perceptions of the faith and its moral values. In doing so we can understand more fully something of the persisting power of anti-gay stereotypes as well as the intensity of feeling about this whole issue.

Some of the anti-homosexual emotion might stem from the repugnance some people feel about the physical acts of gay sexual expression. It is well to recall just what they are. The chief expressions are hand-holding, kissing, mutual caressing, and mutual

masturbation (for both sexes); cunnilingus (for women); and fellatio and anal intercourse (for men). The point is that all of these physical techniques are the property of heterosexuals as well, some statistically more common than others but all widely used. It is unlikely that the foreignness of the physical act to heterosexual experience explains very much.

It may be that heterosexuals feel less personally defined by their sexual orientation and that the apparent centrality of homosexuality to the gay's personal identity is disturbing. But, to the extent that this is true, it is more effect than cause of discrimination—just as racial minority people are typically more conscious of their own skin color, through countless daily reminders from the majority. It seems, on the whole, more accurate to say that heterosexuals simply tend to be preoccupied with the narrowly sexual aspect of the gay person's life, in spite of the fact that gays "vary profoundly in the degree to which their homosexual commitment and its facilitation become the organizing principle of their lives."⁴¹

For this reason language becomes highly significant. The term "homosexual" is clinically correct if it refers simply to the fact that an individual's primary affectional and genital orientation is toward the same sex. Thus, to speak of "homosexuality" meaning a psychosexual orientation or to speak of "homosexual acts" where the reference is specifically to genital and other physical expression is quite accurate. But unfortunately the word carries other associations for many—especially that of clinical pathology and a focus on sexual acts *per se* rather than on human beings. Thus, gays are entirely appropriate in their insistence that *persons* who have this alternative form of sexual orientation be called gay. It is a way of saying more comprehensively and more accurately that one's identity as a sexual human being is far broader than what one does in bed. It is a way of resisting the corrosive effect of having to deal with one's own self-image so constantly in genital terms, in spite of the majority's desire to keep the focus there.⁴²

To press the causes of anti-gay feeling more fully, we need to reflect once more on the two alienating sexual dualisms. Consider spiritualistic dualism. By the strange twist of heterosexual emotional-logic, it would appear that gays are resented because they seem to have succumbed less to the spirit-body dualism which

afflicts us all in various ways. Feeling the internally divisive affects of spiritualism, we yearn (unconsciously as well as consciously) to be whole, to reclaim the essential unity of the body-self. But since majority stereotype insists that gays are more sexually defined and simply *more sexual* than the rest, they may well become the targets of subconscious envy precisely for that reason. Thus, the stereotype bears its curious and unintended harvest, but one which roots it even more firmly in the feelings of many who hold it.

The problem of patriarchal or sexist dualism may be even more basic to anti-gay feeling. This might be experienced in several related ways. One is the heterosexual's possible anxiety about homosexual feelings within the self. While for the sake of economy I have been using "gay" and "heterosexual" in ways that might suggest two sharply distinct and mutually exclusive groups, current research indicates that people commonly tend toward some degree of bisexuality. Most, for reasons not yet fully understood, develop a dominant orientation toward one side or the other. Kinsey's early hypothesis, however, has been repeatedly confirmed by subsequent research: on the scale of zero to six, relatively few persons fall near the zero end (exclusively heterosexual in both feelings and behavior) and relatively few near the six mark (exclusively homosexual). Most are somewhere in between, though with a clearly felt and expressed bias toward one orientation rather than the other.

A recent study draws this conclusion: "Although we suspect that approximately four or five percent of American males—and half of that percentage of females—are exclusively homosexual in their behaviors throughout their lives, much larger numbers are exclusively homosexual in their behaviors at any given time, and even larger numbers engage in both homosexual and heterosexual acts from time to time. For a given individual, ratings on this homosexual-heterosexual continuum may go up or down depending upon the person's age, life circumstances, and the culture in which he or she lives."⁴³ Further, there is not necessarily a perfect fit between one's feelings and one's behaviors regarding sexual orientation.

Even for those whose genital expression beyond puberty has been exclusively heterosexual, there may be homosexual feelings present even if relegated to the unconscious level. Freud's notion of reaction formation becomes pertinent at this point: one way of

copied with unwanted impulses felt in the self is by attacking it in others.⁴⁴

Because of patriarchalism and exaggerated images of masculinity, such anxiety is frequently felt more strongly by men—an additional reason why male gays have consistently been more the objects of negative majority feeling than have lesbians. It seems highly probable that the much more severe condemnation of male homosexual acts in the Old Testament expresses this patriarchal phenomenon: "If a man lies with a male *as with a woman*, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them" (Leviticus 20:13, italics added). If male dignity was a primary consideration, then "sodomy" could not be tolerated, because when a man acted sexually like a woman he was committing a *degradation*—literally, a loss of grade or status—not only in regard to himself but also, by implication, for every other male. But this is not true of the early Hebrews alone. Anthropologists have noted the strong tendency of patriarchal cultures, wherever they may be, to view (especially male) homosexuality as "the unspeakable sin," while matriarchal cultures have been strikingly different on this issue.⁴⁵

A male is supposed to feel masculine in any patriarchy. A psychiatrist comments, "I believe that homosexuality is also abhorred by men because it is felt by them to represent confused, poorly defined and poorly delineated boundaries of what constitutes so-called normal male feelings. Homosexuality, the word and the symbol, threatens masculine gender identity, and identity generally, because it is felt as potential eradication of safe limits and borders within whose confines we can rest easy and sure of what and who we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to feel."⁴⁶ Pollution rituals as studied by anthropologists (see Chapter 2) provide added insight. Those rituals and punishments, in both ancient tribes and modern societies, tend to focus upon the marginal person who does not clearly represent society's patterns and symbols of order. Such persons may be doing nothing morally wrong, yet their status is indefinable. But this places them very basically "in the wrong" for they have "developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone."⁴⁷

In spite of the lack of any demonstrable connection between male homosexual orientation and "effeminate" behavior patterns, the gay male seems particularly threatening to many other men. He seems to belie the importance of super-masculinity, and his very presence seems to call into question so much that many other men have sacrificed to be "manly." But many heterosexual women likewise have difficulty coping with the lesbian. The lesbian is independent from male control in ways that other women are not, and when a heterosexual woman has deeply internalized sexist dualism such independence becomes a considerable threat. Furthermore, both men and women of heterosexual orientation can feel diminished by the presence of a gay person of the opposite sex. Consciously or unconsciously there is awareness that the gay person has no specifically sexual interest in them. To the extent that sexual attractiveness is vital to one's sense of basic self-worth, this, too, is threatening.

There are additional ways in which gay people raise the anxieties of many heterosexuals. Because of their sexual orientation, gay folk appear to disvalue commonly-held values concerning marriage, family, and children. And because we so frequently judge others using our own standards as the ultimate and unquestionable norm, those who so obviously deviate from our experience seem to be seriously deviant indeed. Curiously enough, gay people can also awaken in others a dimly-recognized fear of death. Sometimes the hope of vicarious immortality through children and grandchildren is, in fact, stronger than the resurrection faith for many Christians. If so, the presence of the gay person who (usually) does not have children can awaken the fear of death, even though consciousness of that might be only a nameless anxiety.⁴⁸

At its root, the issue goes beyond the insights of the psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists, valuable though those insights be. It is finally a theological matter, an issue of faith. If we must find an important part of our personal security in a status which depends upon the negative definition of those who differ from us—and if we must find the security of our social order through rigid demarcations of behaviors regardless of their causation, their motivations, their moral intent, or their actual consequences—then we are living by something other than the grace of God.

On the other hand, through that very grace we might know something of the healing possibilities for the sexual dualisms that beset us. To that extent we will not need to project our own alienation onto others but can join with them in our common liberation. It will be liberation from a hierarchical and intensely power-conscious attitude toward life. It will be liberation from the need to organize the proper membership of both church and society around a principle of sex orientation. It will be liberation from the need to blame a minority group for the erosion of all of "our" values. But more, it can be a liberation into greater equality, more sensitive abilities to care about persons, augmented justice, in short, a freedom to love more fully—others and also ourselves.⁴⁹

Implications for the Church

The church's unequivocal support of civil rights for gay people ought not depend upon Christian agreement about the theological and moral appropriateness of homosexuality. The matter of civil rights is a matter of basic Christian commitment to social justice for all persons.⁵⁰

The present legal situation is highly uneven. A few states and municipalities have legislated civil protection for gays, prohibiting discrimination in employment, public accommodations, housing, and licensing on the basis of "affectional or sexual preference." But the majority have not, nor has the federal government. And the passage of such legislation is no guarantee that it will not be rescinded.⁵¹

Most states still have punitive legislation concerning gay people on their books, though in actual practice enforcement is varied and unpredictable.⁵² In any event, laws labeling "sodomy" or "unnatural sexual intercourse" as punishable offenses have a number of inherent problems. They violate the rights of privacy. They are ineffective and virtually unenforceable except through objectionable police methods such as entrapment and enticement. Yet, whether they are enforced or not, sodomy laws stigmatize as criminal the person whose only "crime" is preference for the same sex, and inevitably such laws will take their toll in the gay person's sense of self-worth. Moreover, an important principle of church-state separation may be involved. What some Christians on fairly narrow

doctrinal grounds consider a *sin* ought not to be made a *crime* unless that moral judgment can be defended on broader grounds of public welfare and unless the behavior in question constitutes a provable threat to public decency and personal well-being.

What about the internal life of the churches?⁵³ If and when the churches were to affirm homosexuality and its responsible expression as Christianly appropriate, the implications for church life would be many. Full acceptance of gay Christians into the ongoing life of Christian congregations is basic. Because it is still so largely absent, gay movement toward congregations organized by themselves and principally for gays will undoubtedly continue. It is completely understandable, and in the present day it may be necessary. It is also regrettable, for the majority's exclusionism then continues to fragment the body of Christ. It is an irony, indeed, for while the human sciences and contemporary culture at large have been urging the church to take sexuality more seriously, the church in regard to gays and women has made sexuality primary: it has been used as the organizing principle by which these people have been excluded from full participation."

Congregational affirmation of gays would involve significant attitudinal changes on the part of many other members of the church. Full acceptance of gays as persons, for example, means that all of those gestures and behaviors which are appropriate for heterosexuals are also appropriate for gay people.

Effective pastoral counseling and support for gay persons is crucial. By training, profession, and calling the clergy should be those to whom gay people might turn in complete confidence. At present it often is not so. Lack of sufficient information, lack of insight into the problems which gays confront in a hostile environment, and lack of some deep understanding and acceptance concerning their own sexuality remain formidable problems with many clergy. And this constitutes an important agenda item for theological education.

The church's ministry is to the gay community as well as to gay individuals. While full integration into the richly diverse body of Christ is the ideal, there is also need for supportive gay Christian groups now and in the foreseeable future. A study of male gays in the United States and two European countries points this out: "Perhaps our most salient finding pertains to the beneficial effects

(in terms of psychological adjustment) of a supportive environment—social relations with other homosexuals, their own institutions and publications."⁵⁵ From gay coffee houses in local churches to denominationally-supported gay caucuses, these things are needed. That gay bars and baths are still virtually the only institutionalized meeting places in many urban areas should make a claim upon the church's conscience.

The ordination question continues to be difficult. Not only division over theological and ethical issues but also differing patterns of ministerial placement and job security cause reservations for otherwise sympathetic church leaders. While there are undoubtedly ordained homosexually-oriented ministers right now in every denomination, the vast majority of them quite understandably continue their secrecy. It was not until 1972 that a major American denomination, the United Church of Christ, ordained a publicly-avowed gay candidate, and the second instance took another four years, this time an Episcopalian event. There will be others, but the process is painful and painfully slow. The recommendation made by the United Church's Executive Council to its ordaining bodies is worthy of consideration by other denominations: "that in the instance of considering a stated homosexual candidacy for ordination, the issue should not be his/her homosexuality as such, but rather the candidate's total view of human sexuality and his/her understanding of the morality of its use."⁵⁶ Though presently this may be difficult to implement in some denominational situations, it is the logic of full acceptance. Church assemblies may continue to claim "prudential grounds" as their main reason for barring gay ordinations for some time to come, but one day perhaps that form of prudence will sound as thin as when it was used to bar women and racial minorities from ministry.

Most difficult of all for the church at present is the idea of "homosexual marriage." Heterosexuals of the "rejecting-punitive" and "rejecting-nonpunitive" persuasions, of course, are adamantly opposed to any such thing. But in the "qualified acceptance" position there is a curious ambivalence. On the one hand, there is an insistence that the non-celibate gay person have a genitally-exclusive permanent relationship; homosexual relationships are tolerated only insofar as they approximate heterosexual monogamy. (This insistence,

I believe, often does not represent a genuine attempt to understand the range of meanings in homosexual relationships, nor does it do justice to the different social circumstances under which gay women and men must live.)⁵⁷ But when gay persons *do* want to relate their genital expression to life commitment, as many do, "the church in its concern for morality turns away from these moral hungers and concerns."⁵⁸

It is true that the issue of marriage is complicated by the nature of symbolic traditions. As an ordinance or as a sacrament, marriage has a long theological and ecclesiastical history, and that history has been an exclusively heterosexual one. Deeply-rooted symbols are organic. They grow and develop, and sudden changes are seldom successfully legislated. But when existing symbols do not meet legitimate needs, new symbols and rites may be developed. A "Blessing of Union" rite (by whatever name), for example, might function for gays in ways fully parallel to the marriage rites. Such an ordinance would convey the Christian community's recognition, affirmation, pledge of support, and prayer for divine blessing to the gay couple whose intention is lasting fidelity.

Predictably, acceptance of this is a long time off. Heterosexual Christians who want to affirm individual gays but reject all homosexual genital love will argue that since genital expression belongs only in heterosexual marriage, gay Christians have only one legitimate and responsible choice—celibacy. "Just as we expect the heterosexual to be continent outside of marriage, so, too, the homosexual."⁵⁹ But this demonstrates lack of sensitivity to the gay person's socially-imposed dilemma. The heterosexual's abstinence is either freely chosen for a lifetime or it is temporary until marriage. But the celibacy some Christians would impose upon the gay person would be involuntary and unending.⁶⁰

Those others who urge the non-celibate gay to seek a permanent relationship, and yet would withhold any liturgical blessing, are saying something different but also insensitive. By withholding full recognition of such sexual covenants the church only, if unintentionally, promotes promiscuity, for it says in effect, "*Whatever* your relationship is, it is not fit for public Christian affirmation, support, and celebration." To urge a course of action, fully-committed relation-

ships, and then to deny communal and ritual support to those very relationships is to engage in a humanly destructive contradiction.

When and if the church moves toward liturgical support of gay unions, it should also press toward civil recognition. Such legal matters as tax laws, property rights, and inheritance rights are of legitimate concern to a gay couple and, I believe, are a matter of the equity to which love's justice presses us. Moreover, the symbolic affirmation given by the civil community through legal recognition ought not to be minimized.

On the difficult question of whether previously-married gay persons should be allowed to retain custody of their children when they enter into a gay union, the courts have taken a variety of positions. Yet the main difficulty of the question is not principally the matter of whether the children themselves would be shaped into a homosexual orientation. Dr. John Money speaks to the point: "Society's apprehensions notwithstanding, it is not inevitably psychologically dangerous for children, boys or girls, to live with a divorced parent who sets up a new household with a partner of the same sex. . . . It is not the sameness or difference of the sex of the adults that counts, but the quality of the relationship between them, and the quality of the relationship they establish with the child."⁶¹ The real difficulty lies in the fragmenting pressures which the social environment can put upon a same-sex couple, to the detriment of children. For this the church itself must acknowledge its share of responsibility—but it can also respond to the opportunity with its still considerable capacity to influence public opinion on such moral issues.

The ecclesiastical implications of full gay acceptance are doubtless complex, at least in their effective implementation. Understandably, however, many gay Christians are tired of waiting for all of the complexities to be resolved to the full satisfaction of the majority group. These minority Christians have waited—and have hurt—long enough.⁶² Pushed away from the Lord's Table by subtle or blatant pressures, they have been pushed to find community in the gay bars, baths, and ghettos. One gay Christian puts it in these haunting words: "Usually, for most gay women and men, coming out *in* the church has meant coming out *of* the church. . . . Coming out of the closet, a process the church should be enabling and

ennobling, is a process which must be experienced more often in the secular world rather than the Christian community. . . . And for most of those numerous gay persons who choose not to come out in the church because they want to *stay* in the church—in Christian community—the church has meant more than just a closet . . . the church has become for them a giant tomb, smelling of death rather than life.”⁶³

Surely there is much research on homosexuality (and on heterosexuality as well) that still needs to be done. But this much is clear: our sexuality is vitally important to the dignity of each of us. The basic issue is really not about “them,” but about all of us. How can we live less fearfully and more securely in the grace of God? What is the nature of that loving humanity toward which the Spirit presses us? And what does it mean to be a woman or a man in Jesus Christ?

9

The Sexually Disenfranchised

EVEN THOUGH SEXUALITY is inescapably part of our being—regardless of physical or mental condition and throughout the life-span—social attitudes often tend to desex certain groups of people. Christian literature on sexual theology and ethics typically ignores this phenomenon, as does the church at large. Perhaps this says something more about our own religious and sexual self-understandings than about the amount of factual information currently available.

Our tendency to treat groups of people as nonsexual is a denigration of personhood and thus a claim on the Christian conscience. Furthermore, it is a vivid illustration of the interaction of the biological and physical with the emotional-cognitive-spiritual dimensions in human sexuality. That our sexuality is not simply a matter of biological drive and capacity but just as importantly a matter of meanings is amply illustrated by four groups of people: the physically disabled, the seriously ill, the aging, and the mentally retarded.

The Physically Disabled

One of the major social myths surrounding the physically handi-

THE PLASTER SAINT

A very wise piece of advice, which St. Benedict gives to monks in his Rule, is that they should not desire to be called saints before they are holy, but that they should first become saints in order that their reputation for holiness may be based on reality. This brings out the great difference between real spiritual perfection and man's idea of perfection. Or perhaps one might say, more accurately, the difference between sanctity and narcissism.

The popular idea of a "saint" is, of course, quite naturally based on the sanctity which is presented for our veneration, in heroic men and women, by the Church. There is nothing surprising in the fact that the saints quickly become stereotyped in the mind of the average Christian, and everyone, on reflection, will easily admit that the stereotype tends to be unreal. The conventions of hagiography have usually accentuated the unreality of the picture, and pious art has, in most cases, successfully completed the work. In this way, the Christian who devotes himself to the pursuit of holiness unconsciously tends to reproduce in himself some features of the popular stereotyped image. Or rather, since it is fortunately difficult to succeed in this enterprise, he imagines himself in some sense obliged to follow the pattern, as if it were really a model proposed for his imitation by the Church herself, instead of a purely conventional and popular caricature of a mysterious reality—the Christlikeness of the saints.

The stereotyped image is easy to sketch out here: it is essentially an image without the slightest moral flaw. The

saint, if he ever sinned at all, eventually became impeccable after a perfect conversion. Impeccability not being quite enough, he is raised beyond the faintest possibility of feeling temptation. Of course he is tempted, but temptation provides no difficulties. He always has the absolute and heroic answer. He flings himself into fire, ice water or briars rather than even face a remote occasion of sin. His intentions are always the noblest. His words are always the most edifying clichés, fitting the situation with a devastating obviousness that silences even the thought of dialogue. Indeed, the "perfect" in this fearsome sense are elevated above the necessity or even the capacity for a fully human dialogue with their fellow men. They are without humor as they are without wonder, without feeling and without interest in the common affairs of mankind. Yet of course they always rush to the scene with the precise act of virtue called for by every situation. They are always there kissing the leper's sores at the very moment when the king and his noble attendants come around the corner and stop in their tracks, mute in admiration. . . .

There is no one who will not smile at the naïve beginner who trustingly embarks upon the reproduction of this kind of image in his life. He will always be told to face reality; yet when he is reminded of the sorry facts of life, do we not often assume, secretly, that he is, after all, right? Sanctity is indeed a cult of the *absolute*. It is intransigent, and does not even consider compromise. Do we not really, in our hearts, mean by this that the miracle of sanctity is somehow not only supernatural but even inhuman? Do we not, as a matter of fact, equate the supernatural with a flat denial of the human? Are not nature and grace diametrically opposed? Does not sanctity mean the absolute rejection and renunciation of all that accords with nature?

If we think this, we are in practice admitting the reality of the stereotyped image, and in that case we have no

alternative than to assume that this is the model that is supposed to be realized by the perfect Christian. By what right, then, do we dissuade people from seeking to realize what is in all truth their model?

The fact is that our concept of sanctity is ambiguous and obscure, and this is perhaps because our concept of grace and the supernatural is itself confused. The adage that grace "builds on nature" is by no means a cliché that was devised to excuse half measures in the spiritual life. It is the strict truth, and until we realize that before a man can become a saint he must first of all be a *man* in all the humanity and fragility of man's actual condition, we will never be able to understand the meaning of the word "saint." Not only were all the saints perfectly human, not only did their sanctity enrich and deepen their humanity, but the Holiest of all the Saints, the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, was himself the most deeply and perfectly human being who ever lived on the face of the earth. We must remember that human nature was, in him, quite perfect, and at the same time completely like our own frail and suffering nature in all things except sin. Now what is the "supernatural" if not the economy of our salvation in and through the Incarnate Word?

If we are to be "perfect" as Christ is perfect, we must strive to be as perfectly human as he, in order that he may unite us with his divine being and share with us his sonship of the heavenly Father. Hence sanctity is not a matter of being *less* human, but *more* human than other men. This implies a greater capacity for concern, for suffering, for understanding, for sympathy, and also for humor, for joy, for appreciation of the good and beautiful things of life. It follows that a pretended "way of perfection" that simply destroys or frustrates human values precisely because they are human, and in order to set oneself apart from the rest of men as an object of wonder, is doomed to be nothing but a caricature. And such caricaturing of sanctity is indeed a sin against faith in the

Incarnation. It shows contempt for the humanity for which Christ did not hesitate to die on the cross.

However, we must be careful not to confuse genuinely human values with the rather less than human values that come to be accepted in a disordered society. In actual fact, we are suffering more from the distortion and underdevelopment of our deepest human tendencies than from a superabundance of animal instincts. That is why the stern asceticism that was devised to control violent passions may do more harm than good when it is applied to a person whose emotions have never properly matured and whose instinctual life is suffering from weakness and disorder.

We must reflect more deeply than we do on the effect of modern technological life upon the emotional and instinctual development of man. It is quite possible that the person whose life is divided between tending a machine and watching TV is sooner or later going to suffer a radical deprivation in his nature and humanity.

Holiness presupposes not only a normal human intelligence, properly developed and formed by Christian education, a normal human will, a trained liberty capable of self-commitment and self-oblation, but even before all this it presupposes sound and ordered human emotions. Grace builds on nature not by suppressing instinct but by healing and elevating it to a spiritual level. There must always be a proper place for healthy, instinctive spontaneity in the Christian life. The emotions and instincts of man were at work in the sacred humanity of Christ Our Lord: He showed in all things a sensitive and warmly responsive humanness. The Christian who wants to imitate his Master must learn to do so not by imposing a crude and violent control on his emotions (and in most cases his efforts to do so will be a failure) but by letting grace form and develop his emotional life in the service of charity.

Jesus asked the Pharisees: "How can you believe, who

seek glory one from another?" (Jn. 5:44). To seek a heroicity of virtue that will give us glory in the eyes of other men is in reality to weaken our faith. The true saint is not one who has become convinced that he himself is holy, but one who is overwhelmed by the realization that God, and God alone, is holy. He is so awestruck with the reality of the divine holiness that he begins to see it everywhere. Eventually, he may be able to see it in himself too: but surely he will see it there last of all, because in himself he will continue to experience the nothingness, the pseudo reality of egoism and sin. Yet even in the darkness of our disposition to evil shines the presence and the mercy of the divine Saviour. The saint is capable, as Dostoevsky said, of loving others even in their sin. For what he sees in all things and in all men is the object of the divine compassion.

The saint, then, seeks not his own glory but the glory of God. And in order that God may be glorified in all things, the saint wishes himself to be nothing but a pure instrument of the divine will. He wants himself to be simply a window through which God's mercy shines on the world. And for this he strives to be holy. He strives to practice virtue heroically, not in order to be known as a virtuous and holy man, but in order that the goodness of God may never be obscured by any selfish act of his.

Hence it is that he who loves God, and seeks the glory of God, seeks to become, by God's grace, perfect in love, as the "heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48).

IDEAS AND REALITY

It is always a little foolish to try to set down, in a few clear formulas, the essence of Christian perfection. Sometimes this has to be done. But whenever we try to do it, we must remind ourselves that we do not grasp the meaning of the words right away, and we must take steps to avoid creating the impression that sanctity can be easily achieved by following some simple formula. "Becoming a saint" is not just a matter of picking out a suitable recipe and cooking up the various ingredients of the Christian life according to a formula which pleases our own taste. Yet this is what some spiritual books would sometimes seem to do. And there are always those "holy souls" who have discovered a new method, which sums it all up, and which will henceforth make the whole thing very simple for everyone.

It is of course natural to look for a simple method of solving all spiritual problems. Traditionally, the most fundamental question a man can ask is "What must we do?" (Acts 2:37). The Christian answer, "Repent, be baptized, . . . to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the Holy Spirit" (38), is not the exposition of a "method" or a technique. On the contrary, what St. Peter was thus telling the hearers of his first sermon on the first Pentecost, was that salvation did not consist in following a method so much as in becoming a member of the People of God, the Body of Christ, and living as a member of that Body, with the life of that People, which is a life of love. But love in this context is not simply a question of affectivity and benign interior dispositions.

The Church
and the
Homosexual

John J. McNeill, S.J.

SHEED ANDREWS AND McMEEL, INC.

SUBSIDIARY OF UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

KANSAS CITY

HQ
76
.M156

The Church and the Homosexual copyright © 1976 by
John J. McNeill, S.J. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States
of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any
manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of
reprints in the context of reviews. For information write
Sheed Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 6700 Squibb Road,
Mission, Kansas 66202

Imprimi Potest
Eamon G. Taylor, S.J.
Provincial
New York Province, Society of Jesus

*I pray that with God's merciful grace
this book may serve the spiritual good
of all who read it.*

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

McNeill, John J
The church and the homosexual.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Homosexuality. 2. Homosexuality in the
Bible. 3. Church work with homosexuals. I. Title.

HQ76.M156 261.8'34'157 76-18844
ISBN 0-8362-0683-5

144805

Scripture and Homosexuality

The Use of Scripture

There are two methodological questions in moral theology which are important for a discussion of the morality of homosexuality. The first of these has to do with the use and place of Scripture in moral theology, and the second with the use and place of the human sciences. Since a Christian ethics as such reflects on human reality within the context of Christian revelation, it is obvious that scriptural sources have a role to play: "Biblical ethics contributes data to Christian ethics, but it remains only one aspect, albeit a privileged aspect, of the total data of ethical theology," Father Curran notes. There are, however, two limitations to the use of biblical data. First, the Scriptures are "historically and culturally limited," so that one cannot merely transpose a text of Scripture to the contemporary circumstances of life. Secondly, no thesis would be acceptable which would develop its argument only in terms of individual texts taken out of their context.¹⁵

When Curran makes use of scriptural data concerning homosexuality, however, he does not seem to apply adequately the criteria he himself set down for a legitimate use of such data.

The prefix "homo" in the word homosexual is derived from the Greek root meaning "same," and not from the Latin word for "man." Consequently, it designates anyone who is sexually attracted to someone of the same sex and includes both male and female homosexuals, or lesbians. Most human beings are capable of either homosexual or heterosexual activity, independent of the question of their own psychological sexual orientation. Many homosexuals marry and have children, frequently in an effort to conceal their sexual orientation. On the other hand, there is no necessary connection between overt homosexual behavior and the permanent psychological condition of homosexuality. Many people have had homosexual experiences who do not have a predominantly homosexual orientation but are definitely heterosexually inclined. Consequently, it is important for the moralist to keep the distinction between homosexual activity and the homosexual condition clearly in mind. For there is an important difference in the moral judgment to be passed on a heterosexual indulging in homosexual activity and a true homosexual indulging in the same behavior as an expression of his or her love.

Kinsey limited himself exclusively to objective behavior in the scientific study he made of sexual mores in the United States, leaving aside the subjective question of the sexual orientation of his respondents. According to Kinsey, as much as thirty-seven percent of the male population had some overt homosexual experience.²³ In the majority of cases, however, these experiences seemed to involve little more than transitory experimentation which did not inhibit a later satisfactory heterosexual adjustment. There are many other forms of contingent homosexual practice which can be called situational and which do not indicate a true homosexual psychological condition. When, for example, men are isolated together for long periods of time and separated from the companionship of women—as in prisons or at sea—many will adopt homo-

sexual behavior; but most of them normally discard their homosexual behavior and resume a heterosexual orientation once withdrawn from their segregated situation. Still other forms of conditional homosexual behavior, which do not necessarily indicate a homosexual condition, can be called variational, e.g. heterosexuals who occasionally take part in homosexual activity out of curiosity or as an easy means of sexual indulgence. Still one other form of conditional homosexual behavior should be mentioned; this category involves people who, although they are fundamentally heterosexually inclined, adopt homosexual behavior consequent upon some traumatic event or psychic disorder. If they are cured of their trauma or disorder, they will revert to their original heterosexual inclination.

Although all of the above groups have had some homosexual experience, none of them are what could be called "true" homosexuals. Today we use the word homosexual primarily to refer to the psychic condition of the individual, and not just to occasional behavior. Bailey defines homosexuality as "a condition characterized by an emotional and physico-sexual propensity toward others of the same sex."²⁴ D. W. Cory defines the homosexual as "any person who feels a most urgent sexual desire which in the main is directed toward gratification with the same sex."²⁵ The Dutch Catechism uses the term to refer to those "whose eroticism cannot be directed to the other sex, but apparently only to the same sex to which they themselves belong."²⁶ As John Cavanaugh remarks, "It is important to accept the concept that homosexuality is a way of thinking and feeling, not merely a way of acting. The performance of homosexual acts is, therefore, not in itself evidence of homosexuality."²⁷ Christopher Isherwood indicates the subjective norm for knowing oneself to be a homosexual when he writes: "You first *know* you are a homosexual when you fall in love with another man."²⁸

As Bailey observes, strictly speaking neither the Bible nor Christian tradition knew anything of homosexuality as such; both were concerned solely with the commission of homosexual acts.²⁹ Homosexuality is not, as commonly supposed, a kind of conduct, but a psychological condition. It is important to understand that the genuine homosexual condition—or inversion, as it is often termed—is something for which the subject can in no way be held responsible. In itself it is morally neutral. Like the condition of heterosexuality, however, it tends to find expression in specific sexual acts; and such acts are subject to moral judgment. We must distinguish, then, between the invert and the pervert. The pervert is not a genuine homosexual; rather, he is a heterosexual who engages in homosexual practices, or a homosexual who engages in heterosexual practices. This distinction between the condition of inversion and the behavior of perversion is indispensable for a correct interpretation of biblical and traditional sources.

The real moral problem of homosexuality has to do with judging the moral value of sexual activity between genuine homosexuals who seek to express their love for one another in a sexual gesture. Scripture can be understood as clearly and explicitly condemning true homosexual activity only if it can be interpreted as condemning the activity of a true invert. To such situations, however, it can hardly be said that the Bible addresses itself, since the condition of inversion with all its special problems was quite unknown at the time. On the contrary, there is ample evidence that in most instances where Scripture deals with homosexuality the author probably had in mind what today we would call perversion, namely, the indulgence in homosexual activity on the part of those who were by nature heterosexually inclined.

The Sodom and Gomorrah Story in Genesis

Perhaps the single most important factor in the Western

Christian tradition condemning homosexual practices is the interpretation given to the Sodom and Gomorrah story in Genesis 19:4–11.³⁰ The Church taught, and people universally believed on what they held to be excellent authority, that homosexual practices had brought a terrible divine vengeance upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that the repetition of such “offences against nature” had from time to time provoked similar visitations of divine wrath in the form of earthquakes, floods, famines, outbreaks of pestilence, etc. It was taken for granted, therefore, that by means of both Church discipline and the restraints and penalties of civil law steps should be taken to ward off the wrath of God from the community. It was also taken for granted that the sin for which the cities of the plain were destroyed was that of the habitual indulgence of perverse homosexual practices among men. Consequently, the question must be posed: To what extent is this tradition truly founded in Scripture? What was the meaning of the encounter of Lot and his angelic visitors with the angry inhabitants of Sodom as recorded by the Yahwist author of Genesis 19? Finally, what grounds, if any, are there for the persistent belief that the inhabitants of the city were addicted to male homosexual practices and were punished accordingly?

As D. S. Bailey points out, the attribution of homosexual practices is based usually on the demand the Sodomites are recorded to have made of Lot: “Bring them [Lot’s visitors] out unto us, that we may know them.” The Hebrew word “to know” (*yādhá*) can mean “engage in coitus.” However, Bailey argues this is not necessarily the meaning of the word in this passage. The Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament notes that of the 943 uses of *yādhá*, it is used only 10 times without qualification, apart from this text in Genesis and its derivative in Judges 19:22, to denote sexual coitus. And, again with the possible exception of this text, it always

refers to heterosexual coitus. The word normally used in the Old Testament for both homosexual coitus and bestiality is *shākhābh*. G. A. Barton concludes from this evidence that "there is no actual necessity to interpret 'know' in Gen. xix, 5 as equivalent with 'to have coitus with.' It may mean no more than 'get acquainted with.'"³¹

Bailey argues further that the passage can be interpreted as implying that Lot, who was a *gēr* or resident alien in Sodom, may have exceeded his rights by receiving and entertaining two foreigners whose intentions might have been hostile and whose credentials, it seems, had not been examined. This explanation provides a natural and sufficient reason for the demand: "Where are the men who came to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them."

What, then, Bailey asks, was the nature of the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah? We are told in the passage itself in Genesis that these cities were wicked and grievously sinful, but the writer does not specify the nature of this iniquity more exactly. However, Bailey argues, only on a priori grounds can it be assumed that it was an iniquity solely or even predominantly sexual in character. There is no evidence elsewhere in the passage or in the Old Testament to show that homosexual behavior was particularly prevalent in these cities. Lot's offer to surrender his daughters in place of the strangers is sometimes interpreted as an offer of heterosexual in lieu of homosexual satisfaction, in order to divert the lust of the Sodomites into less inordinate channels. However, Bailey claims, this episode can be reasonably explained as simply the most tempting bribe Lot could offer at the spur of the moment to appease a hostile crowd.

Bailey believes that for an understanding of the development of the Sodom and Gomorrah story it is important to place it in the context of the legends of a similar character in the folk-

lore of the surrounding cultures. Many of these legends tell of a stranger (sometimes a divine being in disguise) who visits a prosperous city and is refused hospitality. He eventually finds a lodging, often with poor outcasts. Consequently, he helps his hosts escape before the city and its inhabitants are destroyed. The most famous of these legends is Ovid's account of Philemon and Baucis.³² These legends may account for the particular form the Sodom story itself assumed during its course of oral transmission prior to being written down. In the legend, as in the same Yahwist author's Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11:9, the conduct which brings judgment upon the offending community and leads to its destruction is never sexual, but always wickedness in general, and in particular pride and inhospitality.

There are several other aspects to the narrative, besides those Bailey mentions, which tend to indicate that in the mind of the Yahwist author of the narrative the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was primarily one of inhospitality to strangers. For example, when the angelic visitors come as strangers to Abraham's tent, the quality of Abraham as a good man is dramatically established by an emphasis on his hospitable reception of the strangers.

Raising his eyes he saw three men standing near him. On seeing them, he ran from the door of his tent to meet them, and bowing to the ground said; "Oh sirs, if perchance I find favor with you, please do not pass by without stopping with your servant. Let a little water be brought to wash your feet, and stretch yourselves out under the tree, while I fetch a bit of food that you may refresh yourselves. Afterwards you may proceed on your way, since you will then have paid your servant a visit." (Gen. 18:1-5)³³

Similarly the quality of Lot as a good man worthy of God's favor is established in contrast to the other inhabitants of Sodom by his hospitality to the same strangers in terms

performer"

strongly reminiscent of the story of the disciples of Emmaus in the New Testament:

The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening while Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to greet them, bowing his face to the ground, and saying: "If you please, sirs, come over to your servant's house to pass the night and wash your feet; in the morning you may rise early, and go on your way." But they said: "No, we will pass the night in the open." He pressed them so strongly, however, that they went over to his house, where he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread for them to eat. (Gen. 19:1-3)

A confirmation of the interpretation of the primary sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as inhospitality occurs in the New Testament where Christ is recorded as discussing the problem of the inhospitable reception of his disciples:

But whenever you come to a town and they do not welcome you, go out into the open streets and say: "The very dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off in protest. But understand this: The Kingdom of God is at hand!" I tell you, on that day Sodom will fare better than that town! (Lk. 10:10-13)

Throughout the Old Testament Sodom is referred to as a symbol of utter destruction occasioned by sins of such magnitude as to merit exemplary punishment.⁸⁴ However, nowhere in the Old Testament is that sin identified explicitly with homosexual behavior. In Ezekiel 16:49-50, for example, we read: "Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters lived in pride, plenty, and thoughtless ease; they supported not the poor and needy; they grew haughty, and committed abomination before me; so I swept them away, as you have seen." Isaiah stresses lack of justice, Jeremiah cites moral and ethical laxity. The Deuterocanonical books usually identify the sin as one of pride and inhospitality. Wisdom (19:13-14), for example, clearly identifies the sin

as one of inhospitality: "... whereas the men of Sodom received not the strangers when they came among them; the Egyptians made slaves of the guests who were their benefactors." Ecclesiasticus (16:8) in turn identifies the sin as pride: "He did not spare the people among whom Lot was living, whom he detested for their pride." Only the late New Testament books, 2 Peter and Jude, find the sin of Sodom connected in any way with sexual practices; but these books, as we shall discuss later, seem to understand the sin as a "transgression of orders" between human and angelic beings.

A further confirmation that in biblical times the sin of Sodom was not connected with homosexual practices as such is to be found in the fact that none of the biblical passages, either in the Old or New Testament, traditionally understood as condemning these practices makes any mention of the Sodom story. Yet such a reference would have been obvious if the sin of Sodom was understood as involving these practices.

It would seem fairly certain, then, that the sin of Sodom was understood in biblical times as primarily one of inhospitality. However, Bailey may perhaps have overstated his case in maintaining that there is no reference at all to sexual mistreatment of the strangers as one aspect of the crime of inhospitality. There is a hint of this in the fact that the same Hebrew word *yādhā* is used again by Lot in verse 7 when he offers his daughters to the inhabitants, and here it clearly and unambiguously implies sexual knowledge:

Please my friends, be not so depraved. I have two daughters who have never had intercourse (*yādhā*) with a man, let me bring them out to you that you may do with them what you will; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof. (Gen. 19:7-8)

It remains possible, however, that the Yahwist author was deliberately playing on the ambiguity of the term, using it in two different meanings.

TYPICAL
OF HEBREW
HUMOR!

Further, Bailey's interpretation makes it difficult to understand how the behavior of the inhabitants of Sodom confirmed the angels' opinion that they were wicked enough to deserve divine punishment, if they only wished to examine their credentials. In the derivative account of the crime of Gibeah in the Book of Judges (19:1–21:25), the identical request is made of the old man, who takes in the stranger for the night, by the inhabitants of Gibeah. In this instance, however, the stranger releases his female consort to the crowd, and they so misuse her sexually that the stranger finds her dead on the threshold in the morning. At a consequent gathering of the tribes of Israel, the stranger makes clear what the crime of Gibeah was:

To Gibeah, which belongs to the Benjamin, I came with my consort to spend the night; but the citizens of Gibeah rose against me, and at night surrounded the house against me. Me they intended to kill, and my consort they ravished, so that she died. (Judg. 20:4–6)

In the book of Judges' derivative, then, the crime of inhospitality included the design to murder the stranger. The obvious stress, once again, is not so much on the implied sexual contact with the stranger as on the right of the stranger to a hospitable reception. John McKenzie's comment on the crime of Gibeah is equally applicable to the Sodom story:

They [the authors] here betray two convictions . . . the absolute sacredness of the guest and the absolute dignity of the male sex. The duty of the host to protect the guest we can understand, but not to the point where the honor and the life of the women of the family are regarded as expendable.³⁵

As we shall note later, the idea of "the absolute dignity of the male sex" was one of the factors underlying the Jewish hostility to male homosexual practices.

Peter Ellis, in his book *The Yahwist: The Bible's First*

Theologian, offers an interesting and suggestive thesis to explain the possible presence of the sexual element in the Sodom narrative. He points out that one of the Yahwist author's principal themes was an attack against Canaanite nature worship directed to the fertility Gods. Speaking of the episode in Genesis concerning the "sons of God" lusting after the daughters of men, he writes:

The Yahwist's audience would certainly recognize in the story an allusion to the ludicrous belief of the Canaanite religion that by means of sacred prostitution—sexual intercourse with male and female prostitutes at the Canaanite shrines—it was possible to enter into special relationship with the god or goddess represented by the sacred prostitute.³⁶

In the fertility-cult ritual, sacred prostitution climaxed the rite which hailed the return of the rains and fertility. "In the punishment which follows the fornication of the sons of God with the daughters of men the rains came with a vengeance. The floods cover the earth, and everything upon its fertile surface is swept away by cleansing waters."³⁷

Ellis suggests that the same polemic against the fertility rites is to be found in the Sodom narrative. "For their crimes, which the author indicates were the unnatural sexual vices the Canaanites had made part of their fertility rites, the five plain cities are wiped off the map."³⁸ The same connection between homosexual practices and idolatry which, as we shall see, is present in all the biblical passages is also present here. Again, the punishment is a "rain"; this time a rain of fire and brimstone, and the result is a barren earth on which nothing will ever grow. Even in this interpretation, the primary crime of Sodom is idolatry, and not homosexual practices as such but these practices as an expression of sacred prostitution.

We shall deal later, under the heading of tradition, with the gradual historical development which transformed the

understanding of the sin of Sodom in Western Christian tradition from a sin primarily of inhospitality to the stranger to one of homosexual practices. At this point we can conclude, however, that the most important biblical basis for the traditional condemnation of homosexual practices as clearly against the express will of God proves on examination the most vulnerable. It has been accepted practically without question that God himself declared his judgment upon homosexual practices once and for all time by the destruction of the cities of the plains. But the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative possibly had nothing whatever to do with such practices. Even if one continues to hold that there is a suggestion of the presence of this sexual element, it does not constitute the essence of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. Rather, the sin remains primarily one of inhospitality. And even if Ellis is correct, the homosexual practices are condemned not in themselves but as part of the idolatrous fertility cult of the Canaanites.

If this interpretation of the true sin of Sodom is correct, then we are dealing here with one of the supremely ironic paradoxes of history. For thousands of years in the Christian West the homosexual has been the victim of inhospitable treatment. Condemned by the Church, he has been the victim of persecution, torture, and even death. In the name of a mistaken understanding of the crime of Sodom and Gomorrah, the true crime of Sodom and Gomorrah has been and continues to be repeated every day. Before advancing to an examination of the Sodom story in tradition, let us first examine the other passages in the Old and New Testaments understood as condemning homosexual practices.

Problems of Translation

Two Greek words in 1 Cor. 6:9 are usually translated as having to do with homosexuality; they are *malakói* and *ársenokóitai*. The second term occurs again in 1 Tim. 1:10.

There is a venerable tradition in English translations of the Bible to assume that these terms apply to homosexual activity. The King James version translates them as "neither the effeminate nor the abusers of themselves with mankind" and the Rheims-Douai version similarly speaks of the "effeminate" and "liers with mankind." The first edition of the Revised Standard version translates both terms with the one word "homosexuals." The only major variation of this tradition is to be found in the Jerusalem Bible, which uses the terms "catamites and sodomites," and the Smith-Goodspeed (Chicago) Bible, which renders them as "sensual" and those "given to unnatural vices." It is interesting to note that the Spanish version of the Jerusalem Bible uses "los homosexuales," whereas the French version speaks of "dépravés" and "gens de mœurs infâmes." As John Boswell notes: "Cultural differences appear to exercise considerable influence over the translation of Biblical passages dealing with sexual morality."³⁹ Bailey particularly takes to task the translators of the Revised Standard version for their use of the single term "homosexuals":

But the translation approved by those responsible for the American Revised Standard version is unfortunately both inaccurate and objectionable . . . it is most regrettable that the reviewers should have shown themselves unaware or unappreciative of the clear distinction which must be made between the homosexual *condition* (which is morally neutral) and homosexual *practices*. Use of the word "homosexuals" inevitably suggests the genuine invert, even though he be a man of irreproachable morals, is automatically branded as unrighteous and excluded from the kingdom of God, just as if he were the most depraved of sexual pervers.⁴⁰

The variation in translations points to the fact that there is very little understanding of the precise meaning of Paul's terms. What is needed is a contextual analysis and an examination of the same terms in other sources. It is truly surprising

that despite the fact that the tradition of moral condemnation of homosexuality springs in large part from these biblical passages, little serious scholarly work has been produced concerning their exact meaning. Translations appear at times to be based on preconceptions rather than serious scholarship.

The immediate context itself gives little or no clue as to the precise meaning Paul intended by these words. In the Corinthian passage Paul lists the types of sinners who are to be excluded from the kingdom of God; and in the Timothy passage, those who have not received the law of God.

S. Wibbing argues that Paul derived these lists from the popular Stoic list of excesses contrary to reason.⁴¹ Both lists have been recognized by scholars as remarkably confusing, and the context is quite loose. Consequently we must turn to the use of the same terms in other sources to discover their meaning. The word *malakós* literally means soft (e.g., Luke 7:25; Mt. 11:8). In a moral context it is normally employed to signify loose, morally weak, or lacking in self-control. There is no justification for applying *malakós* specifically to homosexuality. In patristic Greek *malakia* usually referred to generally dissolute behavior and occasionally referred to specific sexual activity such as masturbation, but never to homosexuality as such. It could conceivably include that, but its normal use referred to any form of immorality. I need not stress the point here that the concept of "effeminacy" has no necessary connection with homosexuality.⁴²

Before considering the second word, *arsenokóitai*, it is important to recall to mind that there was no word in classical, biblical, or patristic Greek with the same meaning as the English word homosexual. In those pre-Freudian days neither the Greeks nor the Romans recognized homosexuality as a psychological phenomenon or condition apart from general sexual behavior. There appears to be no consciousness of a dichotomy such as the modern homosexual versus hetero-

sexual. There were names, however, for persons who practiced homosexual activity. They included, for example, *paiderastés*, *pallakós*, *kinaidos*, *arrenomanès*, and *paidophthóros*. If it were Paul's intention to indicate general homosexual activity as such, it is probable that he would have selected one of these terms.

The word *arsenokóitai*, then, probably does not refer to general homosexual behavior. However, what Paul did mean by it is difficult to ascertain. The use of the noun in the plural does not occur in Greek literature before the Pauline text. Apart from a second-century use of the same word in the *Apology* of Aristides, where from the context it seems to mean "an obsessive corruptor of boys,"⁴³ the most important usage for the purpose of clearer definition occurs in the sixth-century *Penitientiale* of Joannes Jejunator, Patriarch of Constantinople in 586 under Mauritius.⁴⁴ Here it designates a specific sex act, most likely anal intercourse. Nor does this refer exclusively to homosexuality, since in a later passage use is made of the same term to refer to a sex act between men and women.⁴⁵

Some indication of what Paul might have meant by the term can be derived from his use of *kóitai* in the plural. For this usage appears to refer to excess in sexual behavior (cf. Rom. 13:13). It is possible that the author attached to the compound a meaning like "male prostitution." This interpretation is borne out by the Vulgate rendering *masculi concubitores*, that is, male concubines. As we shall see, this interpretation will be strengthened by the more general context of the Old Testament where male prostitution was usually associated with the same context of idolatry.

The Interpretation of Romans 1:26

The strongest New Testament argument against homosexual activity as intrinsically immoral has been derived traditionally

from Romans 1:26, where this activity is indicted as *parà phúsin*. The normal English translation for this phrase has been "against nature." As John Boswell notes: "The modern reader is apt to read into that phrase a wealth of associations derived from later philosophical developments, scholastic theology, Freudian psychology, social taboos, as well as personal misgivings."⁴⁶ Once again it is difficult to ascertain what this phrase meant for Paul. The same phrase in Romans 4:18 is used to express the idea that God himself is acting *parà phúsin* in grafting a wild olive branch (the Gentiles) onto a cultivated tree (the inheritance of the Jews). This usage makes it clear that the phrase itself does not necessarily imply a moral judgment on the action as wrong.

From an examination of the seven uses of the word *phúsis* in the epistles of Paul, one can begin to understand what Paul meant by the word. Although it is most likely that Paul accepted the phrase from the popular Stoic philosophy of the day, he does not necessarily indicate an intrinsic nature or essence in the philosophical sense, such as would serve the basis of a natural-law judgment. Rather, it is always linked to religious and cultural heritage. The Jews are Jews "by nature" (Gal. 2:15); and the Gentiles are uncircumcised "by nature" (Rom. 2:27). Although we are all "by nature" children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), the Gentiles can do "by nature"—i.e. by custom without hearing the word—the things of the law (Rom. 2:14). With the exception of Gal. 4:8, where reference is made to men who "by nature" are not gods, the character referred to by *phúsis* does not necessarily represent something that is innate, but could be a matter of training and social conditioning. This is evident, for example, in 1 Cor. 11:14: "Does not nature teach you that, if a man has long hair, it is a shame unto him?"

When he uses the word nature Paul does not make a sharp distinction between natural law and social custom. For ex-

ample, in the phrase *tên phusikên krēsin* (Rom. 1:26) Paul does not make the distinction between nature and custom which was common among educated Greeks of the time (e.g., *Ignatius to the Trallians* 1.1: "either against custom [*krēsin*] or nature [*phúsin*]"). Rather, he tends to fuse together the concepts of custom and essential character. There seems to be a parallel in Paul's mind between what is *parà phúsin* and the Old Testament concept of *toevah*, i.e. what is not proper according to Jewish law and custom.

Consequently, two interpretations can be justified concerning what Paul meant by the phrase. It could refer to the individual pagan, who goes beyond his own sexual appetites in order to indulge in new sexual pleasures. A strong argument for this interpretation is the explicit reference to the pagans having "abandoned" the "natural uses" of their sexuality for that which is "beyond nature." The use here of the aorist participle (*aphēntes*) considerably strengthens the image of a conscious choice of a type of activity contrary to their normal inclinations. Paul apparently refers only to homosexual acts indulged in by those he considered to be otherwise heterosexually inclined; acts which represent a voluntary choice to act contrary to their ordinary sexual appetite. William G. Thompson, S.J., is inclined to agree with this interpretation:

Concerning the Pauline material, you have come to the same conclusions I have concerning the meaning of "homosexual." Let me quote Fr. Fitzmyer's comments on Romans 1:26: "The contrast between 'females' and 'males' (1:27) makes it clear that the sexual perversion of which Paul speaks is homosexuality (specifically Lesbianism). The depravity of the perversion is the merited consequence of pagan impiety; having exchanged their true God for a false one (1:25), pagans inevitably exchanged their true natural functions for perverted ones . . . (Jerome Biblical Commentary, Article 53, Number 26)." It seems clear that the situation is one of perversion rather than inversion, as you indicate. Hence the passage does not touch the contem-

He does not mention mystery religions because there was a false religion which was known to both Jews and Christians.

unnatural can mean unnatural objects; i.e. phall!

porary issue of homosexuality understood as inversion. Paul simply does not speak to that question.

The second possibility is that *phúsis* refers to the "nature" of the chosen people who were forbidden by Levitical law to have homosexual relations. Paul can be understood as arguing that the recognition of the true God necessarily involves acceptance of the Levitical law. Both interpretations are probably valid. Paul seems to be implying that the Gentiles, having known the truth of God and rejecting it, as a result reject their true nature as regards their sexual appetites, going beyond what was natural to them (heterosexual activity) and what was approved for the Jews.

Consequently, the Pauline epistles do not explicitly treat of the problem of homosexual activity between persons who share the homosexual condition, and as such cannot be read as explicitly condemning such behavior. Neither the *malakói* nor the *arsenokóitai* were necessarily homosexuals; the former were simply debauched individuals and the latter were probably male prostitutes or those given to anal intercourse, which is not necessarily nor exclusively an homosexual activity. The persons referred to in Romans 1:26 are probably not homosexuals—i.e. those who are psychologically inclined toward their own sex—since they are portrayed as "abandoning their natural customs." Moreover, the ambiguity of Paul's use of the word *phúsis* as including what is customary precludes an interpretation of the passage as condemning homosexual activity as intrinsically evil independent of the actor's condition and his social laws and customs.

The Old Testament Context

Because of his Jewish background Paul obviously found the rampant homosexuality he observed in Greece very shocking.

His main point was always that the prevalence of homosexual activity was a sign of alienation from God. He obviously had in mind the Old Testament prohibition of homosexual activity. Consequently, we must note the context of the texts within the Old Testament in which the question of homosexual activity is treated. Homosexual activity was definitely connected in Jewish consciousness with idolatry. An example of this is to be found in Deuteronomy 23:17:

None of the Israelite women shall become a temple-prostitute, nor shall any of the Israelite men become a temple-prostitute. You shall never bring the gains of a harlot or the earnings of a male prostitute as a votive offering to the temple of the Lord your God; for both are abominable to the Lord your God.

It was a practice among some of Israel's neighbors to use both sexes as part of the fertility rites in temple services. Since the Gods were understood as sexual, they were to be worshiped in overt sexual acts. Whenever homosexual activity is mentioned in the Old Testament, the author usually has in mind the use male worshipers made of male prostitutes provided by the temple authorities.

Paul was well aware of this context from the Old Testament. In reading Paul, it is important to keep in mind what Thielicke refers to as Paul's "central concern" in the text dealing with homosexual activity, especially Romans 1:26. Paul obviously believed that homosexual activity, as far as he understood it, was the result of idolatry. As Wood points out, one must remember the sequence of events as Paul portrays them in Romans.⁴⁷ One is not idolatrous because he is a homosexual; he is, however, involved in homosexual activities because he is idolatrous. God punished the idolater by delivering him over to his selfishness and passions. It would appear, then, that Paul treats of homosexual activities only within the context of idol worship. The Holiness Code (Lev. 18:22, 20:13) origi-

nally established the connection between idolatry and homosexual activity. The Code specifically warns the Israelites against accepting the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites. One of the provisions of the Code is that homosexual activity is punishable by death.

Several other cultural and historical circumstances ought also to be considered. One must keep in mind the pro-fertility bent of the Old Testament authors due to underpopulation, with the result that any willful destruction of viable human seed was regarded as a serious crime. Another factor influencing the Old Testament attitude on homosexual activity was the strong Hebrew stress on preserving the family name through progeny. In fact, participation in God's covenant with the chosen people depended on having children. One of the worst curses which could befall a Jewish male was that of sterility.

Still another contextual factor has to do with the common use in biblical times of the act of sodomy as an expression of domination, contempt, and scorn. According to J. Edgar Brun, the ultimate "why" of the wrongness of homosexual activity in Israelite eyes can best be discerned in the account of Noah and his sons after the flood (Gen. 9:18-27). The second part of the story has obviously been expurgated and revised. The Hebrew makes it quite clear that Ham did not merely look at his father but actually did something to him. Yet whereas Ham is the wrongdoer, Canaan, his son, is the person cursed. Brun believes the story was undoubtedly an anti-Egyptian polemic and searches to reconstruct it with an episode in the Egyptian epic entitled *The Contending of Horus and Seth* (XI:3-4).

Horus was the posthumous son and heir of the god Osiris, the primordial king and giver of life. He was invited by his uncle, Seth, to spend a day. Seth's real motive was not to show him hospitality but to disqualify him from inheriting

his father's royal power. To this end, while Horus slept Seth committed an act of sodomy upon him. Since sodomy was inflicted as a punishment on a defeated enemy and was a symbol of domination, Seth could then claim that he had conquered Horus and demand the kingship in his place. Brun claims that the original biblical story followed the same line: "By committing sodomy upon his father, who was the ancestor of all men after the flood . . . Ham (Egypt) could also claim the right to dominate all mankind."⁴⁸ The revision, which omits any explicit reference to a sexual act and makes Canaan the recipient of Noah's curse, was prompted by the fact that the Canaanites had become the immediate threat to Israel's political and religious survival.

Calling attention then to the common practice, especially of the Egyptians, of inflicting sodomy as a punishment upon a defeated male enemy as a symbol of domination, Brun suggests that the principal reason the Israelites regarded homosexual practices as an abomination was that

they too viewed sodomy as an expression of scorn; and in a society where the dignity of the male was a primary consideration, voluntary acts of a homosexual nature could not be tolerated. Both parties would then be undermining the very foundations of a patriarchal society; the one because he uses another as a woman; the other because he allows himself to be used as a woman. The dignity of the male is dishonored by both.⁴⁹

We have already seen McKenzie's comment that one of the aims of the narrator of the crime of Gibeah was to establish the absolute dignity of the male. It is interesting to note that the Holiness Code only condemns male homosexuality; no mention is made of female homosexual practices, but there is a condemnation under penalty of death of any woman who has sexual relations with an animal.

As Herman van de Spijker notes in his summary of biblical

teaching concerning homosexual activities: both in the Old and the New Testaments, wherever the Bible clearly seems to refer to homosexual activity, we must recognize a judgment of condemnation. However, every text dealing with homosexual activity also refers to aggravating circumstances such as idolatry, sacred prostitution, promiscuity, violent rape, seduction of children, and violation of guests' rights. As a result one can never be sure to what extent the condemnation is of homosexual activities as such or only of homosexual activities under these circumstances: "Nowhere is there a specific text which explicitly rejects all homosexual activities as such independent of the circumstances." Van de Spijker is nevertheless of the opinion that such an objective universal condemnation can be deduced from these texts taken in conjunction with the biblical image of mankind in the creation account of Genesis; he concludes that "all homosexual relationships, even when they are true expressions of an I-thou relationship, are *objectively* contrary to nature as the order of creation."¹

The Creation Account in Genesis

There are two accounts in Genesis of the creation of human sexuality. The first account, a version dated around 550-500 B.C., is from the Priestly tradition: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them." This account clearly indicates that the divine purpose in creating sexual differentiation was procreation. Consequently, the first covenant between God and humanity was a procreative covenant. "And God blessed them and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. . . .'"

However, according to scholars the second account, attributed to the Yahwist author, is much more ancient, dated 950 B.C. In this account God's purpose in creating sexual differentiation is not associated with procreation; rather, the

purpose was companionship and a cure for loneliness: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" Thus mutual love and fulfillment is equally a biblical norm for human sexuality. Many moralists seem to ignore the significance of the Yahwist's account of creation and assume that procreation is the only biblical norm.

There is, then, another and, perhaps, more important reason apart from individual texts why some moralists believe that all homosexual activity is condemned in Scripture as contrary to the will of God for man. This reason has to do with the interpretation they give to the creation account in Genesis. As Neale Secor argues, many Christian ethicists read a condemnation of all homosexual activity into the texts dealing specifically with that question because they are reading these particular texts with a basic assumption. The assumption is that the homosexual condition is the result of man's fall and is a deviation from the God-willed state of heterosexuality as expressed in the creation. Under this assumption sexual differentiation is not only normative for human relations; it assumes a metaphysical significance in the very constitution of what is essentially human. "To be human becomes by hypothesis to be purely male or female. Only in monogamous marriage desirous of reproduction is this essential duality held in balance."² In the Priestly tradition in the Old Testament, the human male apart from the human female was not considered a full human being. As Rabbi El'azar put it: "Any Jew who has no wife is no man."³

Curran appears to be in agreement with this position. As he sees it, human sexuality derives its meaning exclusively "in terms of a relationship of male and female in a procreative union of love."⁴ To defend this position he makes a general appeal to scriptural data. "The scriptural data undoubtedly points in this direction, even to the possible extent that the

likeness to God is precisely in terms of the sexuality by which men and women are able to enter into a covenant of love with one another." In the opinion of Karl Barth, "man and woman—in the relationship conditioned by this irreversible order—are the human creatures of God and as such the image of God and likeness of the covenant of grace."⁵⁴ Since man's likeness to God is to be found in his power to love, some moralists find it necessary to read into that love relationship the specific reality of heterosexual love, almost to the exclusion of all other forms of human community and human love. They tend to identify the biblical concept of person with heterosexual orientation and find in that orientation the divine image in man.

In contrast with this understanding of the scriptural data is T. C. DeKruijf's study, *The Bible on Sexuality*. DeKruijf concludes his survey of Old Testament texts concerning sexual morality by pointing out that the primary message of the Old Testament concerning sexual morality was that love, including sexual love, requires respect for the other person; and the sin which man can commit in his sexual conduct with another consists in dishonoring the person of a fellow human being. "If one does not acknowledge the only true personal God, it follows unavoidably that one will also not acknowledge one's fellow man as a person who has a value of his own."⁵⁵ As we have seen, J. Edgar Brun found an identical reason for the condemnation of homosexual activities, since in the cultural and historical context of the Old Testament such activities could only be envisaged as expressions of hatred and scorn. The essential evil of homosexual activities appeared to be the dishonoring of a fellow human being.

DeKruijf points out, however, a very important difference between the treatment of sexuality in the Old and the New Testament. Marriage no longer plays the same role in the New Testament that it did in the Old. In the Old Testament

"contact with God was connected with their being the people of God, because in this chosen people God dealt with man. Therefore it was important for every man and woman in Israel to receive this life and pass it on in marriage."⁵⁶ To understand the difference of viewpoint in the New Testament it is important to remember that the new people of God are no longer bound by blood relationship; membership in the new people of God is no longer a question of human descent. Consequently, marriage no longer occupies the central place it had in Israel. "In the New Covenant it is given to anyone to be fertile in the new people of God through a love which surpasses even marital love in value and therefore in fertility."⁵⁷ This new understanding of love lies at the origin of other vocational choices besides marriage, such as a life of sexual abstinence, and other forms of human community, such as the celibate community. One can no longer identify the love between humans that makes them the likeness of God univocally with the heterosexual relationship in marriage.

Another important difference between the Old and New Testaments concerning human sexuality has to do with the belief in personal immortality. For the most part in the Old Testament there was little stress on personal immortality; rather, stress was placed on the survival of the "people" and one's own survival in and through one's children. However, the New Testament emphasis on resurrection carried with it the belief in personal immortality and, consequently, freed the individual from the necessity of marrying and bearing children in order to achieve a form of survival beyond the grave. This change of emphasis is of particular interest vis à vis the homosexual, since, as many psychologists point out, one of the most profound roots of homophobia is the connection, unconscious for the most part, between homosexuality, barrenness, and death.

Nowhere is this new attitude concerning human sexuality

more evident than in the account of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-39). The Lucan author had as his purpose to depict the work of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the first Christian community and how that community differed from its predecessor. He stresses that people who were considered outcasts by Israel for various reasons were to be included in the new community. The first group are the Samaritans. The second group, symbolized by the eunuch, are those who for sexual reasons were excluded from the Old Testament community. "No one who has had his testicles crushed or his penis cut off shall marry into the Lord's community" (Deut. 23:1). However, in Isaiah 56:2-8 there is an explicit prophecy that with the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the new covenant the eunuch, who was formerly excluded from the community of God, will be given a special place in the Lord's house and an immortal value:

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say: "The Lord will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say: "Behold, I am a dry tree." For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off . . . these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel; I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.⁵⁸

The application of this prophecy to the homosexual can be defended, because the term "eunuch" in the New Testament is used not only in its literal sense—i.e., those who have been physically castrated—but also in a symbolic sense for all those

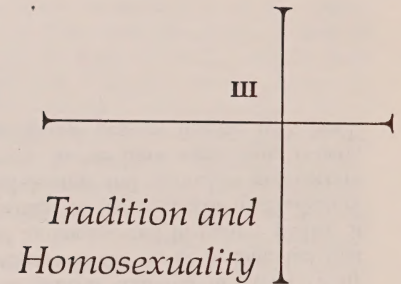
who for various reasons do not marry and bear children. For example, in Matthew 19:12 Jesus, discussing marriage and divorce, says to his apostles: "There are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."⁵⁹

The first category—those eunuchs who have been so from birth—is the closest description we have in the Bible of what we understand today as a homosexual. It should come as no surprise, then, that the first group of outcasts of Israel that the Holy Spirit includes within the new covenant community is symbolized by the Ethiopian eunuch. It is the Spirit who takes the initiative by leading Philip to the encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch of the court of Candace. The eunuch believes in Christ as the Messiah and receives baptism and the Spirit and rides on into history "full of joy." The symbolism of the passage is quite obvious. The Holy Spirit takes the initiative in leading the new Christian community to include among its members those who were excluded for sexual reasons from the Old Testament community.

Later, when we consider natural law ethics, we will also consider whether, in the light of recent psycho-sexual discoveries, heterosexual images of what it means to be a man or a woman derived from the Bible can be uncritically accepted as God-given aspects of creation or whether it must be determined to what extent they are human creations open to serious theological criticism and possible change and development. We can conclude at this point, however, that a general consideration of human sexuality in the Bible leads to only one certain conclusion: those sexual relations can be justified morally which are a true expression of human love. Consequently, once all the cultural and historical circumstances are kept in mind, the only condemnation of homosexual activity to be found with certainty in Scripture is a condemna-

tion of perverse homosexual activity indulged in by otherwise truly heterosexual individuals as an expression of contempt or self-centered lust and usually associated with some form of idol worship. In the Old Testament an attempt was made to desacralize human sexuality by removing it from the realm of the mysterious and impersonal forces of nature. In the New Testament an attempt was made to resacralize human sexuality by integrating it into the ideal context of free, interpersonal human love.

The positive ideal concerning the use of human sexuality proposed in the New Testament is the need all human beings are under to struggle to integrate their sexual powers into their total personality, so that their sexual drive can be totally at the disposition of their desire to achieve union in love with their fellow human beings and with God. There is a considerable body of evidence—the Hooker, Shofield and Weinberg and Williams studies, for example, which we will discuss further on—that many homosexuals have avoided the traps of promiscuity and depersonalized sex by entering into mature homosexual relationships with one partner with the intention of fidelity and mutual support.⁶⁰ By means of this relationship they have not only escaped promiscuity but have grown as human beings. They have learned to integrate their sexual powers in a positive way into their personality, with the result that these impulses become no longer a negative, compulsive and destructive force, but an instrument within their control for the expression of human love. There does not seem to be a clear condemnation of such a relationship in Scripture; yet under these circumstances a homosexual relationship could possibly be interpreted as fulfilling the positive ideals of Scripture.⁶¹



The Appeal to Tradition

Many moralists buttress their claim to found the objective sinfulness of homosexuality on scriptural data with an appeal to tradition. "The Christian tradition has constantly accepted the view that homosexuality goes against the Christian understanding of human sexuality and its meaning."⁶² While admitting that historical circumstances and methodological shortcomings have possibly led tradition into error on certain points, yet, Curran concludes, "there seems to be no sufficient evidence for such a judgment in the case of homosexuality." The natural law approach proposed by Aquinas "still seems to correspond to a certain human connaturality condemning homosexuality as wrong."⁶³ This "human connaturality" might be just that, but it is even more likely that it might be a cultural prejudice formed and fed by tradition itself. In fact, one can and should ask all the same critical questions of tradition that have been previously asked of the scriptural data, especially since that tradition had its primary origin in the scriptural data.

There are three principal sources to which explicit appeal

is made in Western Christian tradition in support of its condemnation of homosexual practices. The first is the contrast in cultural mores between Greek and Hebrew culture. The early Christian community, primarily drawn from among the Jews of the diaspora, were inclined to see any variation of behavior in Greek culture as a deviation from the divine law given to Israel and as the inevitable breakdown of morality due to idolatrous practices. The second major source of the condemnation of homosexual practices was an appeal to the popular Stoic philosophical concept of nature, a concept which culminated in Aquinas's version of natural law. The third source, and in some respects the most important, since it was deemed to be a divine confirmation of the first and second sources, was the prevalent version of the Sodom and Gomorrah story. Let us begin our critical reflection on tradition with this third source.

The Homosexual Interpretation of the Sodom Story

As we have seen, the sin of Sodom was never interpreted in Old Testament times as being primarily sexual, to say nothing of involving homosexual practices; rather it is portrayed as a sin of pride and inhospitality. The first references to the sin of Sodom which indicate explicitly that that sin was of a sexual nature occur in the Palestinian apocrypha of the second century before Christ. In the *Book of Jubilees* XVI.5-6 we read:

... the Lord executed his judgment on Sodom, and Gomorrah and Zeboim, and all the region of the Jordan, and he burned them with fire and brimstone, and destroyed them until this day, even as (lo) I have declared unto thee all their works, that they were wicked and sinners exceedingly, and that they defiled themselves and committed fornication in their flesh, and worked uncleanness on the earth. And in like manner God will execute judgment on the places where they have done accordingly to the uncleanness of the Sodomites, like unto the judgment of Sodom.⁶⁴

In a later passage in the *Book of Jubilees* (XX.5-6) an interesting parallel is drawn between the sin of the Sodomites and the sin of the giants:

... and [Abraham] told [his sons and grandsons] of the judgment of the giants, and the judgment of the Sodomites, how they had been judged on account of their wickedness, and had died on account of their fornication, and uncleanness, and mutual corruption through fornication.

The giants referred to here are the "sons of God" referred to in Gen. 6:1-4 and the "angels" of 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. The "Watchers" of Jewish legend (*Enoch* VI-X; *Jub.* VII.21f., X.5f.; *Test. Reub.* V.6-7; *Test. Naph.* III.5) are represented as lusting after mortal women and descending on earth to enjoy coitus with them. In the *Book of Jubilees* VII.20-22 we read:

Noah exhorted his sons to ... guard their soul from fornication and uncleanness and all iniquity. For owing to these things came the flood upon the earth, namely, owing to the fornication wherein the Watchers against the law of their ordinances went a-whoring after the daughters of men, and took themselves wives of all which they chose; and they made the beginnings of uncleanness.

It was from this unlawful intercourse that the Naphidim, or Giants, were born. The *Book of Jubilees* thus draws a parallel between two occasions when illicit sexual conduct called forth the vengeance of the almighty. These passages represent the first departure from the general tradition of Scripture by stressing the sexual character of the sin of Sodom; but that sin is still not indicated as homosexual in nature; rather, it is heterosexual and consisted in the commission of adultery and acts of gross sexual license and shameless promiscuity between men and women. As we have seen, some experts believe that both the scriptural passage dealing with Noah

and the flood and the passage dealing with Lot and the rain of fire contain material from the Priestly tradition attacking ancient idolatrous practices concerned with seeking rain, practices which involved sexual orgies.

In a contemporary document, *The Testament of Naphtali* II.4-5, one of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a Palestinian work of Pharisaic origin, we have the first indication of the sin of Sodom as homosexual in nature:

... recognizing ... in all created things, the Lord who made all things, that ye become not as Sodom, which changed the order of nature. In like manner the Watchers also changed the order of their nature, whom the Lord cursed at the flood. ...

Here the offense of both the Watchers and the Sodomites is said to have consisted in changing the "order of nature." Both committed a similar breach of a universal principle of order established by the Creator. The Watchers subverted the natural and evident order by the unlawful mingling in coitus of two incongruous elements, the angelic and the human. If we recall that in the Sodom story the visitors were angels, then the chief offense seems to be understood as a searching for unlawful commerce with an incompatible order of beings, whereas the sexual element is subsidiary in the mind of the author. This interpretation is supported by a New Testament passage, Jude 6-7, in which the evidence of these apocryphal texts can be detected:

... and angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves also to fornication and gone after strange flesh (*hetera sarx*), are set forth as examples suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

Once again the homosexual element is only incidental; the

emphasis is upon the sexual incompatibility of the angelic and human orders rather than upon any particular type of coitus between persons of the same sex. Bailey concludes from this evidence that by the end of the first century A.D., though the sin of Sodom is still regarded as a transgression of order, there is also a perceptible emphasis of its homosexual implications. However, as the *Testament of Naphtali* gives evidence, this development began as early as the second century B.C. The concept of transgression of order adds a new element in a polemical addition to the *Testaments* during the period 70-40 B.C.: "... and the daughters of the Gentiles shall ye take to wife, purifying them with an unlawful purification; and your union shall be like unto Sodom and Gomorrah." The reference here is to the mixed marriages so much abhorred by strict Jews. Since Sodom had also come to be associated with barrenness, the passage probably implies that union with Gentile women contracted in defiance of the law will be cursed with sterility.

The next step in this development can be traced to the "writing of Enoch," a lost work written in Hebrew. In the *Testament of Naphtali* IV.1, we find this reference: "I have read in the writings of Enoch ye yourselves also shall depart from the Lord, walking according to all lawlessness of the Gentiles, and ye shall do according to all the wickedness of Sodom." R. H. Charles regards this passage as a loose adaptation of a passage from the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, a Hellenistic Jewish work based on the *Writings of Enoch*.⁶⁵ In 2 *Enoch* XXXIV.2. among the lawless actions of the Gentiles is clearly indicated that of homosexual practices. Consequently by approximately 50 B.C. the interpreters of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* began to regard the sin of Sodom as including homosexual practices. The clear connection that the *Testament of Naphtali* V.1 establishes between the "wickedness of Sodom" and the "wickedness of the Gentiles" is sig-

nificant. This lends support to the possibility that the origin of the homosexual interpretation of the Sodom story can be explained by the Jewish reaction to a closer acquaintance with homosexual practices common in the Hellenistic world during the century preceding the Christian era.

Another passage from a later stratum of 2 *Enoch* explicitly identifies the sin of Sodom with the pederasty of Hellenic society: "This place [the north region of the third heaven] is prepared for those who dishonor God, who on earth practice the sin against nature, which is child-corruption after the Sodomitic fashion . . ." However, the first writings to identify the sin of Sodom with homosexual practices in general—the writings which probably had the most decisive influence on early Western Christian tradition—were those of Philo, dating from the middle of the first century A.D., and those of Josephus, from around the year 96 A.D. The first recorded instance of a homosexual coital connotation being clearly attributed to the Hebrew word *yādhā* in the text from Genesis occurs in Philo's *Quaest. et Salut. in Genesis* IV.31–37, where *yādhā* or *suggignomai* is interpreted as "servile, lawless and unseemly pederasty." The association of the wickedness of Sodom with the lawlessness of the Gentiles has become particularly associated with the pederasty of an alien and hostile culture.

In his work *De Abrahamo*, Philo reads all the evils of first-century Alexandria back into the story of Sodom in Genesis:

The land of the Sodomites was brimful of innumerable iniquities, particularly such as arise from gluttony and lewdness. . . . The inhabitants owed this extreme license to the never-failing lavishness of their sources of wealth. . . . Incapable of bearing such satiety . . . they threw off from their necks the law of nature, and applied themselves to deep drinking of strong liquor and dainty feeding and forbidden forms of intercourse. Not only in their mad lust for women did they violate the marriages of their neighbors,

but also men mounted males without respect for the sex nature which the active partner shares with the passive, and so when they tried to beget children they were discovered to be incapable of any but a sterile seed. Yet the discovery availed them not, so much stronger was the force of their lust which mastered them, as little by little they accustomed those who were by nature men to play the part of women, they saddled them with the formidable curse of a female disease. For not only did they emasculate their bodies, but they worked a further degeneration in their souls, and, so far as in them lay, were corrupting the whole of mankind.⁶⁶

Most of the most prevalent myths and prejudices concerning homosexuality find expression here, such as the myth of effeminacy—the idea that homosexuals must either play the active-masculine role or the passive-feminine role in their relationships—the myth of corruption, and the myth of child abuse. Philo probably did not invent these myths but, as Bailey points out, was only expressing in vivid language a conception of Sodom and its offense which had gradually established itself among Jews of the diaspora during the preceding two centuries of their contact with Hellenic society.

In his *Antiquities* Josephus also clearly identifies the sin of Sodom with homosexual practices, and in particular with pederasty:

About this time the Sodomites were proud on account of their riches and great wealth; they became unjust toward men and impious toward God. . . . They hated strangers, and abused themselves with Sodomitical practices. God was, therefore, much displeased with them, and determined to punish them for their pride.

This passage represents the first clear use of the word sodomy to describe homosexual practices. In still another passage from Josephus' *Antiquities* we read: "Now when the Sodomites saw the young men [the angels] to be of beautiful countenance,

and this to an extraordinary degree . . . they resolved themselves to enjoy these beautiful boys by force and violence."

Although there is good grounds to believe that by the end of the first century A.D. the sin of Sodom had become widely identified, among the Jews of the diaspora, with homosexual practices, yet it is remarkable to note that rabbinical writings reflect scarcely anything of this development. The majority of the references to Sodom both in the *Talmud* and the *Midrashim* continue to stress the Old Testament themes of pride, arrogance, and inhospitality. The one exception to this is a midrash on Genesis: "The Sodomites made an agreement among themselves whenever a stranger visited them they should force him to sodomy and rob him of his money."⁶⁷ The writer implies that the most serious and reprehensible feature of the Sodomite's inhospitality was homosexual acts reserved for strangers and accompanied by violence and robbery.

When we turn to the Fathers of the Christian Church, there is no doubt whatever that they accepted without question that the sin of the Sodomites was their particular and inordinate addiction to homosexual practices, particularly pederasty, and it was for this reason that God punished them. Clement of Alexandria, for example, writes that the Sodomites had "through much luxury fallen into uncleanness, practicing adultery shamelessly and burning with insane love for boys."⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, in a homily to the people of Antioch, writes: "The very nature of the punishment was a pattern of the nature of the sin. Even as [the Sodomites] devised a barren coitus, not having for its end the procreation of children, so did God bring on them such a punishment as made the womb of the land for ever barren and destitute of all fruit."⁶⁹ Augustine in his *City of God* speaks of Sodom as "the impious city where custom had made sodomy as prevalent as laws have elsewhere made other kinds of wickedness."⁷⁰ In another

work Augustine repeats Paul's theme in the Epistle to the Romans that homosexual perversion is itself a recompense for other offenses, since such acts are not only sins per se but also the penalties for sins. In the *Apostolic Constitution* we read: "Thou shalt not corrupt boys: for this wickedness is contrary to nature and arose from Sodom."⁷¹ We should note a second factor entering into the picture with the writings of the Fathers, namely, the Stoic concept of sexual nature with its emphasis on procreation, leading to the judgment that homosexual practices were "contrary to nature." We shall deal with Stoic influences on Christian tradition later on.

Herman van de Spijker summarizes his study of the attitude of the Fathers of the Church on the subject of homosexuality with these words:

The Fathers consistently rejected homosexual activity. The argument for this rejection was based on the order of creation and the Epistle to the Romans. Sodom is the cautionary example of the punishment to be expected or the clear sign of the lawlessness of such activity. . . . Although the fierceness of the condemnation can be better understood in terms of anti-Hellenic and apologetic motives, and although the Fathers speak mostly against the lust of pederasty and of perverted and self-perverting heterosexuals, yet implicitly they condemn all homosexual activity as contrary to the order of creation. We can conclude from both the biblical and the patristic heterosexual image of man that the Fathers had no understanding of the difference between homosexuality as a subjectively moral expression of love or as an egotistical expression of lust.⁷²

The Development of Legal Tradition

A survey of Western Christian tradition concerning homosexual practices would be incomplete without a consideration of the treatment of these practices in Roman law, especially in the codifications of the Christian emperors Theodosius and Justinian, since these codifications exercised a very strong

influence not only upon Western European systems of civil and criminal jurisprudence but also upon ecclesiastical law.

The *Lex Scantania* was the original Roman law directed against pederasty, but little is known about it. The next legal measure was the Emperor Philip's law (A.D. 249) abolishing male prostitution. The *Lex Julia de adulteris* (c. 17 B.C.) was probably extended by an interpretive process to include sexual acts committed with boys, a crime meriting capital punishment. For we read that on 30 December 533 the following law was included among the *Institutes* compiled by Tribonian at the Emperor Justinian's request:

In criminal prosecutions cases, public prosecutions take place under various statutes including the *Lex Julia de adulteris*, . . . which punishes with death (*gladio*) not only those who violate marriages of others, but those who commit acts of vile lust with [other] men.⁷³

Thus Roman law was extended to include homosexual acts of all kinds, including those between consenting adults, and the death penalty was assigned.

The first law under the Christian emperors was promulgated on 16 December 342 by Constantius and Constans:

When a man marries [and is] about to offer [himself] to men in a womanly fashion, what does he wish, when sex has lost its significance; when the crime is one which is not profitable to know; when Venus is changed into another form; when love is sought and not found? We order the statutes to arise, the laws to be armed with an avenging sword, that those infamous persons who are now, or who hereafter may be, guilty may be subjected to exquisite punishment.⁷⁴

As Bailey remarks, it is difficult to know how seriously to take this edict. W. G. Holmes remarks that its curious phraseology "almost suggests that it was enacted in a spirit of mocking complacency."⁷⁵

Fifty years later, on 6 August 390, another law was put forth by Valentinian II, Theodosius, and Arcadius:

All persons who have the shameful custom of condemning a man's body, acting the part of a woman's, to the sufferance of an alien sex (for they appear not to be different from women) shall expiate a crime of this kind in avenging flames.⁷⁶

This law is particularly notable because it prescribed the penalty of burning, which was the most common criminal punishment imposed upon Sodomists in the Middle Ages and has persisted at least nominally in some countries until recent times.

Bailey was of the opinion that these earlier Roman laws were never rigidly enforced. For by the year 538 Justinian found it necessary to publish the first of his *Novellae* against homosexual acts:

. . . since certain men, seized by diabolical incitement, practice among themselves the most disgraceful lusts and act contrary to nature; we enjoin them to take to heart the fear of God and the judgment to come, and to abstain from suchlike diabolical and unlawful lusts, so that they may not be visited by the just wrath of God on account of their impious acts, with the result that cities perished with all their inhabitants. For we are taught by the Holy Scriptures that because of like impious conduct cities have indeed perished, together with the men in them. 1 . . . For because of such crimes there are famines, earthquakes, and pestilences, wherefore we admonish men to abstain from the aforesaid unlawful acts, that they may not lose their souls. But if after this our admonition any are found persisting in such offences, first, they render themselves unworthy of the mercy of God, and then they are subjected to the punishment enjoined by the law. 2. For we order the most illustrious prefect of the Capital to arrest those who persist in the aforesaid lawless and impious acts after they have been warned by us, and to inflict on them extreme punishments, so that the city and state may not come to harm by reason of such wicked deeds.⁷⁷

The chief motive behind this law is clearly stated. Justinian sees homosexual practices as endangering the state; for they are liable to provoke the vengeance of God in the form of earthquakes, famine, and pestilence. We see here the influence of the homosexual interpretation of the Sodom story. Bailey finds the approximate cause of this legislation in the terrible earthquake and floods which in the year 525 devastated the cities of Edessa, Anazarba, and Pompeiopolis in the East, Corinth and Dyrrachium in Europe, while Antioch was destroyed by fire and inundations. In the year 543 a great plague swept through Constantinople. It was doubtless with this in mind that Justinian took occasion during the following Lent, on 1 March 544, to issue a new novella summoning to repentance those in particular whose homosexual practices might provoke other and possibly more dreadful consequences. In that novella he returns to the theme of Sodom:

1. For, instructed by the Holy Scriptures, we know that God brought a just judgment upon those who lived in Sodom, on account of this very madness of intercourse, so that to this very day that land burns with inextinguishable fire. By this God teaches us, in order that by means of this we may avert such an untoward fate. . . . Wherefore it behooves all who desire to fear God to abstain from conduct so base and criminal that we do not find it committed even by brute beasts.⁷⁸

Justinian's treatment of homosexual practices became the *locus classicus* for civil legislation concerning this matter. An illustration of how pervasive and perduring that influence was is to be found in Blackstone's treatment of homosexual practices in his *Commentary on the Laws of England*:

The crime against nature . . . [is one which] . . . the voice of nature and of reason, and the express law of God, determined to be capital. Of which we have a special instance, long before the Jewish dispensation, by the destruction of two cities by fire from

heaven; so that this is a universal, not merely a provincial, precept. In the Old Testament the law condemns sodomists (and possibly other homosexual offenders) to death as perpetrators of an abomination against the Lord, while in the New Testament they are denounced as transgressors of the natural order and are disinherited from the kingdom of God as followers of the vile practices of the heathens.⁷⁹

The first enactment of a Church council concerning homosexual practices occurred at the Council of Elvira in 305–306. This decree forbade admission of *stupratores puerorum* to communion even at death.⁸⁰ The decree of the Council of Ancyra in Asia Minor in 314 was extremely influential on the Church in the West, since it was frequently cited as authoritative in subsequent conciliar enactments against homosexual practices. Canon 17 concerns those "who either have been defiled or commit defilement with animals or males."⁸¹ The council prescribes a variety of punishments dependent on the age and marital status of the perpetrator. Males, if married and over fifty, are to be admitted to communion only at the point of death. Basil of Nyssa in the year 375 in a letter to Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, writes: "He who is guilty of unseemliness with males will be under discipline for the same time as adulterers."⁸² Gregory of Nyssa in a canonical letter to Letoius, Bishop of Melitene (c. 390), explains the reason for treating sodomists the same as adulterers, namely, because both combine unlawful pleasures with the infliction of injury upon another.⁸³ Basil and Gregory both call for fifteen years of penitence and exclusion from the sacraments. In 693 Egica, King of Gothic Spain, in an opening speech to the Sixteenth Council of Toledo, urged the clergy to address themselves to curbing homosexual practices, and once again an implicit appeal was made to the Sodom story: "Among other matters, see that you determine to extirpate that obscene crime committed by those who lie with males, whose fearful

conduct defiles the charm of honest living and provokes from heaven the wrath of the supreme judge."⁸⁴

The most extensive set of enactments against homosexual practices during mediaeval times were the canons issued by the Council of Nablouse on 23 January 1120 by Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem, and Garmund, Patriarch of Jerusalem.⁸⁵ On that occasion a sermon was preached in which all the ills that had befallen the Kingdom of Jerusalem as well as earthquakes, menacing signs, and the attacks of the Saracens were attributed to evil living. Consequently, the council enacted twenty-five canons against the sins of the flesh, four of which dealt with homosexual practices, and burning was prescribed for the impenitent. By the end of the twelfth century sodomy was a reserved sin which must be referred to the bishop or the pope for absolution.⁸⁶

The penitentials (works on the sacrament of penance originating in the Celtic churches of Ireland and Wales) illustrate how the Church attempted to deal with homosexual practices. Their chief concern was to discriminate as fairly as possible between different kinds of acts according to their nature and circumstances and assign appropriate penances. The use and influence of the penitential spread to England, France, Germany, and even Italy and determined for five centuries the standards according to which penance was administered. The most notable pronouncement on the subject of homosexual practices in the Middle Ages was the *Liber Gomorrhianus* of Peter Damian, addressed in 1051 to Pope Leo IX.⁸⁷ In this work Peter inveighs against the practice whereby the penitentials distinguish between types of homosexual acts and assign different penances. In particular he calls for the removal from orders of any cleric found guilty of such acts. Leo's response, *Nos Humanius Agentes*, is chiefly remarkable for its emphasis upon the need for a sense of proportion and a more humane approach to the question of homosexual prac-

tices. He rebukes the harsh, unyielding spirit of Peter's work, maintaining that not all those who engage in homosexual acts are equally sinful, and thus not all merit the same ecclesiastical censure. He especially notes that it is not necessary to depose a cleric from orders for this reason, concluding: "And if anyone should dare to criticize or carp at this decree of ours, let him know that *he* is in danger of his orders."⁸⁸

Consequently, as Bailey has demonstrated, the formation of the Western Christian attitude to homosexual practices underwent a cumulative process of development in which many diverse influences played a part, the post-exilic Jewish reinterpretation of the Sodom story, pagan and Christian developments of Roman law, the teaching of the Church Fathers, the legacy of Church councils and synods, the penitential system, and so on. By the end of the thirteenth century, and especially with the writings of Aquinas, that tradition was fully formed. The influence of the homosexual interpretation of the Sodom story is evident in every strand of that development. There was a tendency on the part of civil officials to read into any disaster a divine judgment due to homosexual practices. For example, with regard to the wreck of the *Blanche-Nef* in 1120, in which the heir of Henry I of England perished with a number of young nobles, William of Nangis asserts that this was a divine punishment due to the fact that all were sodomists.⁸⁹ At the time of the Albigenian heresy there began a tendency to associate homosexual practices with heresy. Since the Albigenian heresy was also known as the Bulgarian heresy, the word *bougre* became associated with sodomy and remains in our present vocabulary as the word "buggery."⁹⁰ Bailey argues that although the Albigenians never advocated homosexual practices, their position that marriage was a state of sin gives some credence to the opinion that they had an easygoing attitude toward other forms of sexual activity. All too often unscrupulous politicians would

make use of a charge of homosexual activities in order to defeat their political enemies. But it is notable that the Church itself never imposed capital punishment for this sin; rather, its emphasis was on repentance and rehabilitation. In fact the Church courts, by attempting to retain jurisdiction over this question, tried to protect the accused against the more severe punishments of the civil courts.

The ultimate culmination of legal injustice and persecution of the homosexual community in recent times occurred in Hitler's Germany. In 1936 Heinrich Himmler issued a decree which read: "Just as we today have gone back to the ancient German view on the question of marriages mixing different races, so too in our judgment of homosexuality—a symptom of degeneracy which could destroy our race—we must return to the guiding Nordic principle, extermination of degenerates." Orders were given that all homosexuals had to wear purple triangles in public, just as Jews had to wear a star of David. In 1937 the SS newspaper, *Das Schwarze Korps*, estimated that there were two million homosexuals in Germany and called for their extermination. Himmler gave orders that all homosexuals were to be sent to Level 3 camps—that is, death camps.

No one knows exactly how many homosexuals perished. The Austrian Lutheran Church places the number of homosexuals who died at no less than 220,000, the second largest group after the Jews. However, the injustice and the indignity did not end with the fall of the Nazi regime. After the war all other survivors of the concentration camps were treated generously in the matter of reparations. Homosexuals, however, were told that they were ineligible for compensation, since they were still technically "criminals" under German law. The survivors could not even publicly protest, since they had to keep their homosexual identity secret for fear of further discrimination.⁹¹

The Anomalies of Tradition

In dealing with tradition, it must not be forgotten that the readily available documents which lend themselves to historical interpretation, such as the Bible, law codes, the enactments of councils, and so on, are really only the surface of that tradition—"the proximate or immediate determinants," as Bailey calls them. Underlying these documents are various deep-rooted socio-psychological factors which have come to conscious awareness only in recent times and still await full and careful examination. Speaking of scriptural tradition, Neale Secor remarks:

One might continue the corrective process by delving into the rather late times when the Genesis traditions were formed for a greater appreciation of the then cultural needs of the monogamous agrarian family unit, the real fear of Canaanite and other apostate idolatrous sexual-religious practices, the primitive reverence for the semen, and the biological misunderstanding regarding the conception and birth processes.⁹²

C. Rattrey Taylor in his book *Sex in History* attempts to bring out some of the culturally conditioned attitudes on sexuality.⁹³ He finds a universal phenomenon in cultures based on a patriarchal principle. These cultures always tend to combine a strongly subordinationist view of women with a repression and horror of male homosexual practices. Whereas cultures based on a matriarchal principle are inclined to combine an enhancement of the status of women with a relative tolerance for male homosexual practices. Taylor concludes that the tradition of the Christian West has been fundamentally "patrist." This may help to explain certain striking anomalies from an ethical viewpoint in that tradition, anomalies which have affected profoundly our laws and public opinion in regard to homosexual practices.

One of the most remarkable of these anomalies is the almost

complete disregard of lesbianism—sexual acts committed by women with one another—in the various documents we have examined. Although the Holiness Code, for example, explicitly condemns under penalty of death male homosexual practices and female bestiality, no mention is made of female homosexual practices. Apart from a disputed reference to unnatural female acts by Paul in Romans 1:26, there is no reference to female homosexuality in Scripture and scarcely any in all the other documents of tradition.

There is a marked tendency, as we have seen, in all the sources of tradition to condemn sodomy in terms of a man “playing the role of a woman” to another man, or using another man “like a woman.” As Bailey remarks, this has been looked upon in tradition as the degradation not so much of human nature as of the male as such.⁹⁴ If there is a certain message in the narratives of Sodom and Gomorrah and of the Crime of Gibeah, as McKenzie remarks, it is the belief of the time in the absolute respect that should be shown the male and the relative lack of concern for the female. Or from another perspective, one begins to suspect in a careful reading of the documents of tradition that human nature and maleness were frequently identified emotionally, if not consciously, in the popular mind. To stimulate or encourage or compel another to simulate the passive coital function of the female represented a perversion intolerable for a society organized according to the theory of the essential subordination of woman to man, a society which particularly valued male aggressiveness and dominance. Consequently, as Bailey remarks, a man who acted “like a woman” was treated as one who had betrayed not only himself but his whole sex, dragging his fellow men down with him in his voluntary disgrace.

The premise of male superiority also helps to explain the curious disparity between the moral judgment passed upon heterosexual moral offenses on the one hand and homosexual

offenses on the other. There is a tradition of referring to homosexual practices as “the most heinous” of all sins. This tradition seems to take its rise in the Story of Joseph (Gen. 37:2), where Joseph is reported to have brought back a “bad report” of his older brothers to his father. The Vulgate translates the passage as “*accusavitque fratres suos apud crimine pessimo.*” Although there is no basis whatsoever in the Bible for reading into this passage an accusation of homosexual practices, yet the term *crimen pessimum* became associated with these practices.

The tradition of male superiority also helps explain why in the popular view female prostitution, fornication, and even adultery are frequently treated with less contempt than homosexual practices. These immoral actions at least proclaim the essential virility of their perpetrators. Every effort at legal reform concerning male homosexual practices brings forth the irrational contention that male homosexuals do more harm to society than a person who seduces a wife or husband, breaks up a marriage, assaults or injures a young girl, begets and abandons an illegitimate child, etc. And the more severe legal penalties testify to the effectiveness of that contention.

Another reason for the distinction traditionally made between male and female homosexual practices is the observation that only male homosexual practices involve the emission of seminal fluid. There has been a definite influence on Western sexual attitudes and on traditional moral theology derived from a reverence for human male semen. This reverence had its origin in an ignorance of human physiology and the conception and birth processes. Because there was no knowledge of the female process of ovulation, women were traditionally believed to be merely the incubators in which male seed was deposited. Clement of Alexandria spoke of the male semen as “*met oligon anthropon*—something almost or about to become a man.”⁹⁵ The idea that the male semen at emission was almost

human controlled sexual theory until the biological investigations of human physiology in the sixteenth century. Even Galen spoke of there being no difference between "sowing the womb and sowing the earth."⁹⁶

Despite the advances in our knowledge of these processes, the ancient tradition continues to influence our ideas of sexual conduct and morality until the present day—for example, the moral attitude to male masturbation. Bailey believes that the reverence for the male seed as "almost human" was undoubtedly responsible in no small measure for the fact that society has always tended to reprobate and punish homosexual practices of males, while more or less ignoring those of females.⁹⁷

Although our ignorance of birth processes has been a thing of the past for several centuries and the emancipation of women has made definite strides, something of this deep-seated but irrational view of women remains today to influence the attitude of men in general toward the homosexual male. As we shall see, Dr. George Weinberg believes that the real psychological crisis in our culture remains male homophobia.⁹⁸ The evidence from tradition suggests an interesting connection between the status of women and the status of the male homosexual that remains to be explored. Even celibate priests are frequently themselves victims of an unconscious homophobia. When John Harvey did a survey of Catholic priests concerning their attitude toward male homosexuals who might seek their advice, he discovered:

Some betrayed an emotional revulsion even to a pastoral discussion of inversion, quoting St. Paul that such things should not be mentioned among us. Others dismissed the subject with an abrupt declaration that nothing can be done for inverts and the writer was wasting his time. Still others assumed a harsh attitude of bitter condemnation.⁹⁹

The lesbian's practices, on the other hand, do not involve any lowering of a privileged social or personal status. Consequently, they can be relatively ignored by a society in some respects fundamentally anthropocentric and homophobic. Bailey concludes:

It might perhaps be well for us frankly to face the fact that rationalization of sexual prejudices, animated by false notions of sexual privilege, has played no inconsiderable part in forming the tradition which we have inherited and probably controls opinion and policy today in the matter of homosexuality to a greater extent than is commonly realized.¹⁰⁰

Tradition and Human Nature

The Influence of Stoicism

One important aspect of Western Christian tradition remains to be examined; that is the influence of Stoicism, especially its interpretation of the natural law as regards sexual ethics. Underlying the attitude of the early Church to homosexual practices there was, as we have seen, the belief that they were specially condemned by God in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Nevertheless, such practices were generally denounced mainly on the grounds that they were in themselves "contrary to nature."

The first such reference to nature, as we have seen, occurred in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The *Apostolic Constitutions* speaks of "... abhorring as unlawful, and that which is practiced by some contrary to nature, as wicked and impious."¹⁰¹ Tertullian writes: "All other frenzies of lusts which exceed the laws of nature and are impious toward both bodies and the sexes we banish, not only from the threshold, but also from all shelter of the Church, for they are not sins so much as monstrosities."¹⁰² John Chrysostom is particularly emphatic in denouncing homosexual practices as unnatural. Commenting

on Romans 1:26–27, he observes that all genuine pleasure is according to nature; the delights of sodomy, however, are an unpardonable insult to nature and doubly destructive. They jeopardize the race by deflecting the sexual organs from their primary procreative purpose, and they sow disharmony between men and women, who are no longer impelled by their physical desires to live peacefully together.¹⁰³ Michel Spanneut, an authority on the influence of Stoicism on the Church Fathers, maintains that the moral writings of nearly all the Fathers of the Church in the first two centuries of the Christian era “were dominated by the popular Stoicism of the milieu in which that Christian generation lived.”¹⁰⁴

Stoic philosophy was primarily a moralism. Seneca defined philosophy as “*recta vivendi ratio*.”¹⁰⁵ The fundamental Stoic axiom was to “live according to nature.” Life according to nature was understood as submission to the divinely appointed order of the world. Nature itself was identified, however, not with instinct but with reason: “To the rational animal the same act is according to nature and according to reason.”¹⁰⁶ God, in Stoic philosophy, was understood as reason, or *logos*, diffused through the cosmos. Reason, as “soul of the world,” was given a definite biological interpretation. The law of nature was identified with the biological laws governing the physical universe. Thus the rational law of nature represented God’s material presence in the universe as cosmic biological reason. To conform to the physical laws of nature was simultaneously to achieve union with the divine. “Live with the gods. And he lives with the gods whoever presents to them his soul accepting their dispensations and busied about the will of God, even that particle of Zeus, which Zeus gives to every man for his controller and governor—to wit, his mind and reason.”¹⁰⁷

The principal virtue of the wise man was understood as ataraxy, or apathy—a life of indifference. In practice Stoic

ethics was largely a fight against the passions or affections. These passions—pleasure, sorrow, desire, and fear—were considered irrational and, consequently, unnatural. All forms of passion, even pity and love, were to be eliminated as irrational. The process of achieving a state of indifference was understood as a process of eliminating the influence of affection on human behavior, so that behavior would be totally controlled by reason and completely independent of all externals, even of other persons.¹⁰⁸ In order to escape chance and its capricious happenings, such as the death of a loved one, man must render himself indifferent to all exterior results of his actions, judging them only in terms of their interior effect, which is to be found in the intention. As Spanneut remarks: “The notion of apathy, applied to God, to Christ, and especially to the Christian, received special emphasis. Baptized from the time of Origen, it was used by all the writers [of the early Christian period], particularly in the treatises on anger, and became the ideal of the monk, the basis of his contemplation.”¹⁰⁹ Clement of Alexandria devotes an entire chapter of the *Pedagogue* to the connection between good and reason, evil and irrationality.¹¹⁰ Many of the Christian martyrs—Justin, for example—quote extensively from Stoic sources concerning the virtue of indifference. The Fathers of the Desert appeal to Stoic indifference as the foundation of asceticism. Basil uses the same theme in his writings concerning monastic asceticism.

Hand in hand with the virtue of indifference, the Stoic philosophers stressed a doctrine of rational determinism, according to which everything that happens in the world happens with an ineluctable necessity. “If the gods have determined about me, they have determined well; for it is not easy to imagine a deity without forethought. And as to doing me harm, why should they have any desire toward that? For what advantage would result to them from this, or to the whole which is the special object of their providence?”¹¹¹

Particular emphasis was placed on the triumph over all fears, especially the fear of death. The Stoics denied the immortality of the individual as such; impersonal reason alone is eternal. Thus the only rational response to death was to become detached from life, including one's own. "Be not perturbed, for all things are according to the universal, and in a little time thou wilt be nobody and nowhere, like Hadrian and Augustine."¹¹² One should learn to value one's existence rationally; that is, only in terms of the positive contribution one can make to the totality. Since the spirituality of the early Church evolved in response to the needs of the martyr, the emphasis on indifference and triumph over the fear of death received particular emphasis.

Along with stress on mind and reason went a dualistic depreciation of the body, both as the seat of the irrational passions and as the contingent element in man. "*Nam corpus hoc animi pondus ac poena est, premente illo lorgetur, in vinculis est.*"¹¹³ Death is to be welcomed as the release of the mind from the chains of the body.

Seneca advised a daily examination of conscience in which one would tote up all the positive and negative aspects of one's existence precisely in terms of one's being able to make a positive contribution to the totality. The truly wise man will become indifferent to life itself. The day he sees his continuance in existence as more of a negative than a positive value, he will be ready to take his own life. The Stoic hero is pictured as cutting his own veins in a warm bath while discoursing in noble indifference about reason to his admiring friends. Thus Seneca himself, in obedience to Nero's command, opened his veins in A.D. 65.

But to persevere in his indifference, the key point in Stoic doctrine was to "never fall in love," that is, never to form a real attachment to anyone. Marcus Aurelius points out that to fall in love is to open yourself up to every misery and to

lose all tranquility of soul; for the lover necessarily desires personal immortality both for his loved one and for himself. But such a desire is irrational. Love for another must only take the form of "love for the virtue of which this person is an example." Similarly, in his treatise on friendship Thomas Aquinas holds: "The happy man will need these virtuous friends inasmuch as he seeks to study the virtuous actions of the good man who is his friend."¹¹⁴

Consequently, when the Stoics turn to sexual conduct it should come as no surprise that no consideration whatsoever is given to interpersonal love. Rather, stress is placed on the rational end of sexual activity as this end can be read in the biological laws of nature which are one with the will of God. Accordingly, the only rational motive for undertaking sexual intercourse is procreation. Zeno remarks that "cannibalism, incest, and homosexuality are not wrong in themselves," his reasoning being that moral evil pertains to the human will and intention. These actions become wrong because no purely rational motive can exist for such practices.¹¹⁵

Stoicism and the Church Fathers

In order to understand the attitude of the Fathers of the Church toward homosexual activity, we must place it within the context of their attitudes on women and on sexuality in general. The early Fathers of the Church tended to accept Platonic and Stoic body-soul dualism. As Emil Brunner notes: "Through Platonic-Hellenic mysticism the idea penetrated into the early Church that the sexual element as such is something low and unworthy of man . . . an idea which . . . is in absolute opposition to the biblical idea of creation."¹¹⁶ The Fathers frequently repeat Aristotle's dictum that "the woman is a mutilated male" and agree with his position that the male is by nature superior and the female inferior; the one rules and the other is ruled.¹¹⁷ There is a tendency to identify the male

principle with the soul and the female principle with the body. Woman is naturally subject to man because in man the direction of reason is greater. This went hand in hand with a sexual interpretation of original sin, with Eve symbolizing all women as the evil protagonist.

In fact, St. Augustine went so far as to identify all sexual attraction and pleasure with sin. This is Augustine's portrayal of what sexual intercourse exclusively for the purpose of procreation would have been like before man sinned:

Without the seductive stimulus of passion, with calmness of mind and with no corrupting of the integrity of the body, the husband would lie upon the bosom of the wife. . . . No wild heat of passion would arouse those parts of the body. . . . The semen would have been introduced into the womb of the wife with the integrity of the female organs being preserved, just as now with the same integrity being preserved, the menstrual flow of blood can be emitted from the womb of a virgin. . . . Thus not the eager desire of lust, but the normal exercise of the will should join the male and female for breeding and conception.¹¹⁸

Gregory of Nyssa in his turn, in his work *On the Creation of Man*, accepted the androgyne myth of Plato's *Symposium*, namely, that primal man was bisexual. Gregory believed that the male-female severance was a result of sin and a punishment for sin. As a consequence all sexual desires are a vice and have their origin in corrupted nature. John Scotus Erigena, in the ninth century, accepted Gregory's position that man as the perfect image of God was originally without sexual differentiation and that sin was the cause of the differentiation which ensued.¹¹⁹ In such a climate of opinion it should come as no surprise that Marcion, for example, should refuse to accept into the Church anyone who refused to renounce all sexual relations permanently.

The purely rational end of sexual behavior, procreation, is continuously stressed by the Church Fathers when they are

dealing with sexual morality and marriage. One can clearly see the influence of popular Stoic philosophy in the insistence on reason rather than on the sacramental aspect of marriage. Clement, for example, emphasizes the irrationality of seeking only pleasure in marriage.¹²⁰ Justin Martyr reflects popular Stoicism when he writes: "We [Christians] do not enter marriage for any other reason than to have children."¹²¹ Jerome quotes the saying of Sextus with approval: "He who loves his own wife ardently is an adulterer."

Aquinas and Stoicism

Thomas Aquinas was the only great scholastic theologian to discuss the subject of homosexual practices in any detail. Albert the Great, in a short reference, gives four reasons why this is the most detestable of practices: it proceeds from a burning frenzy; it has a disgusting foulness; those addicted to it seldom succeed in shaking off the vice; and, finally, it is as contagious as any disease, rapidly spreading from one to another.¹²²

In contrast to that of Albert, Thomas's treatment is calm and dispassionate.¹²³ As in the case of the Fathers, we must place Thomas's treatment of homosexuality in the context of his treatment of women and of sexuality in general. Woman, he held, was "the inferior workman who prepares the material for the skilled artisan, the male."¹²⁴ He theorizes that since every child born should be male, because the effect should resemble its cause, there must be some etiological explanation for the birth of the inferior female. Such a birth, he claims, need not necessarily be the result of some intrinsic factor—a "defect in active power" or an "indisposition of the material"—but may sometimes arise from an extrinsic accident. He quotes the Philosopher (Aristotle) to the effect that "a moist south wind helps in the generation of females, while a brisk north wind helps in the generation of males."¹²⁵ Thomas's attitude toward women is best expressed when he says of Eve: "She was not

fit to help man except in generation, because another man would have proved more effective help in anything else."¹²⁶

Concerning human sexuality in general, Aquinas rejects John Scotus's position that sexual differentiation as such is due to sin, but he agrees with Augustine's Stoic view that all sexual pleasure is the result of sin.¹²⁷ The Stoic influence is evident in the fact that Aquinas deals with the subject of homosexuality in the course of his treatise on the cardinal virtue of temperance. He identifies the vice contrary to this virtue as lust, whose essence is "to exceed the order and mode of reason where venereal acts are concerned." Any act which is not consistent with the proper end of venereal acts, namely the generation and education of children, necessarily pertains to the vice of lust. The lustful man desires not human generation but venereal pleasure, and it should be noted that this pleasure can be experienced by indulging in acts which do not issue in human procreation. It is precisely this which is sought in the sin against nature.¹²⁸

Thus the first grounds for Thomas's condemnation of homosexual practices is his belief that they necessarily represent an inordinate selfish seeking of venereal pleasure; and, as we have seen, Thomas believed that all such pleasure is the result of sin. What we should note with interest is that there is no mention in this passage of a third possible motive for venereal acts, whether heterosexual or homosexual, besides either lust or procreation—namely, the possibility that they might be an expression of genuine interpersonal love. There is no reason to assume that Aquinas had any more awareness than had the Church Fathers of the homosexual condition. Rather, it is almost certain that in his reference to homosexual practices he is assuming that these are merely sexual indulgences undertaken from a motive of lust by otherwise heterosexual persons. This is the conclusion drawn by Joseph McCaffrey in his study

of Aquinas's treatment of homosexuality. Having rigidly subordinated the rational and, therefore, moral use of sex in general to one end—procreation—Aquinas assumes that homosexual acts, since they cannot serve that purpose, must be motivated necessarily and exclusively by a drive toward sexual pleasure.

In a response to an objection that if no one is injured by homosexual activities, there is no sin against charity, Aquinas points out that the order of nature is derived from God. Consequently, any contravention of that order is necessarily "an injury done to the Creator."¹²⁹ Thus the most fundamental objection Aquinas had to homosexual practices was identical to that of the Stoics: they cannot serve the exclusive divine purpose governing the use of all human sexuality, the end of procreation. It would seem that Aquinas, like his Stoic predecessors, never even considered the possibility that human sexual behavior, even in a heterosexual context, never mind a homosexual one, could be morally justified as an expression of human love.

In one relatively unknown but important passage in his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas speaks of homosexual practices as capable of being "*connaturale secundum quid*."¹³⁰ He asks the question, When is pleasure "according to nature"? He distinguishes between those pleasures that are according to human nature specifically as rational—such as the "contemplation of the truth"—and those pleasures which humans have in common with other animals—such as "venereal activity" (*veneorum usus*). But, he continues: "In the case of both types of pleasure it can happen that what is unnatural simply speaking can be connatural in a certain situation. For it can occur that in a particular individual there can be a breakdown of some natural principle of the species and thus what is contrary to the nature of the species can become by accident natural to this individual (*per accidens naturale huic individuo*)." Among other ex-

amples of this, Thomas explicitly mentions male homosexual activity (*in coitu masculorum*). Unfortunately he never explores this distinction further.

To deal exclusively with the passages in which Aquinas speaks explicitly of homosexual practices is somewhat unjust to his influence upon the consequent development of sexual ethics. Although Aquinas himself did not apply his new insights to practical ethical issues, he did lay the philosophical foundation for a personalist ethics. It was not until he reversed the act-potency relationship of Greek philosophy with his central idea of a real distinction between essence, or nature, as potency and existence as act that a philosophical foundation was laid for understanding man as positively individual and unique and, therefore, incapable of being legitimately totally relativized to the ends of the species from an ethical viewpoint. Further, Thomas opened up the possibility of conceiving human nature not as a static given, but as a dynamic teleological process of growth and development. This made possible an understanding of ethical norms as ideal goals governing the development of personal community, rather than just biological nature. But this development had to await the work of philosophers true to the spirit, if not the letter, of Thomistic philosophy. It was not until the rise of modern personalist philosophies of human subjectivity and freedom that an appropriate methodology for an ethical study of human sexuality in a personalist context became available.

Homosexual Activity and Procreation

Many moral theologians grant that the older Catholic approach to sexual morality inordinately placed all the emphasis on the biological and physical aspects of the sexual act, ignoring the interpersonal context in which the act takes place. "The procreative aspect becomes the primary and sometimes the only purpose of sexuality."¹³¹ However, these same moralists

are of the opinion that one must maintain some connection between the personal and the procreative aspects of human sexuality: "The joining together of the love union and procreative aspects does appear to be the meaning of human sexuality and marriage. There seems to be a strong presumption in favor of such an understanding which cannot be overturned without grave reason."¹³²

When, therefore, they come to the specific problem of homosexual behavior, these same theologians appeal to this necessary and indissoluble connection between procreation and human sexuality as another reason for the condemnation of homosexual activity:

The position of the hierarchical magisterium in the Roman Catholic Church would argue that every single act of sexual intercourse must be open to procreation. Obviously, such an approach gives one a strong rule and criterion to use in condemning homosexual acts or other seemingly errant forms of sexual behavior.¹³³

This is by no means as obvious a conclusion as many believe. The Church's attitude toward the ends of marriage has undergone a definite development. Beginning with an early insistence, under Stoic influence, on the exclusive end of procreation, at a later stage the Church began to stress procreation as the primary end, but granted the existence of secondary ends, namely the mutual love and fulfillment of the marriage partners. The Church has traditionally recognized the moral goodness of heterosexual relations between a married couple incapable of having children; this despite the heavy emphasis of tradition that procreation must be the primary aim of all sexual activity. For example, Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* (No. 59) writes:

Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the married state use their right [to sexual intercourse] in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons either of

time or of certain defects, new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends such as mutual aid, the cultivation of mutual love and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider as long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic meaning of the act is preserved.¹³⁴

From the moment the Church granted the morality of the rhythm method, for example, as a natural form of birth control, and justified sexual activity as still fulfilling the "secondary" aims of mutual love and fulfillment, there was a serious reason to reconsider the traditional position that all homosexual activities are necessarily wrong on the ground that they cannot lead to procreation. In a relatively overlooked passage of this same encyclical, *Casti Connubii*, the mutual love between the partners is recognized in its own right as the "*primaria matrimonii causa et ratio*":

The mutual inward moulding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of children, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof.¹³⁵

In their treatment of marriage in the document Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Council Fathers at Vatican II go a step further in this development by dropping all reference to primary and secondary ends. As Robert McAfee Brown comments:

The document . . . goes far beyond the traditional teaching that the procreation and education of children are the primary ends of marriage. Thanks to the interventions of such men as Cardinals Léger and Suenens, the document stresses the importance of conjugal love. Sexual love between men and women is clearly

distinguished from "the dispositions of lower forms of life"—where one has a suspicion it often used to linger in the thought of earlier moral theologians. Pure conjugal love "involves the good of the whole person." In such statements the lie is given to the notion that sex in marriage is evil, or only a concession to concupiscence, or valid only for procreation.¹³⁶

The Church continues to condemn any voluntary separation of the coequal purposes of sexual behavior, procreation and mutual love. However, such an argument against voluntary separation would be applicable to the homosexual only if one refuses to accept the psychological data concerning the homosexual condition and persists in viewing all those who involve themselves in homosexual practices as remaining free to choose heterosexual relationships. The genuine homosexuals' situation is more comparable factually to that of a heterosexual couple incapable of having children than, for example, to the situation of those who practice birth control, since it is not through a free choice within their control that homosexuals eliminate the possibility of procreation from their sexual life. Yet there is a considerable body of evidence that those homosexuals who have limited their sexual expression in an ethically responsible way have by that means achieved what Pius XI indicates as the "chief reason and purpose" of sexual love within marriage looked at in a wider context "as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof."

Human Nature and Homosexuality

One all-important problem remains. Even granting that mutual love and fulfillment is a coequal natural end of human sexuality as such, there seems to be a lingering doubt that this end could possibly justify homosexual activities, since these activities seem so obviously to involve a perversion of the biological function of the sexual organs. As we have seen, the

phrase "against nature" has retained its meaning from its Stoic origin as "contrary to reason." One learns the purposes of nature by an impersonal and objective reading of the biological law governing the sexual operations of the human body. However, this understanding of nature represented in fact a rejection of what is unique in human nature as such, namely, the personal realm. Consequently, it negates any possibility of understanding human sexual activity within the specifically human dimension of interpersonal love.

Humans emerge from the impersonal forces of nature precisely as self-aware and free. What is specific about human nature is not some quality which is common to all the species, such as reason, but the fact that "every individual is more than the species."¹³⁷ It is this personal uniqueness of every individual which forms the necessary basis for the possibility of human love. A loving action, even if it takes the form of a sexual gesture, must be directed to the other as unique, as end in himself or herself. To treat another person merely as a means to an end that lies outside the person himself represents a failure to love that person as unique.

From this personalist viewpoint an overemphasis on procreation can be seen as leading potentially to a seriously immoral and dehumanizing form of sexuality. Modern consciousness has been sensitized by the movement for women's rights to the fact that to understand the female exclusively in a functional manner as "bearer of children" is a depersonalizing and, therefore, immoral attitude. Such an emphasis can be seen as in conflict with the Gospel emphasis on the respect and love due to one's fellow human as person. As we have seen, a general consideration of scriptural data concerning sexual behavior leads to only one certain conclusion: those sexual relations can be justified morally which are a true expression of human love. The call of the Gospel to man is not one of conforming passively to biological givens; rather, that call is to transform

and humanize the natural order through the power to love.

The overemphasis on nature, reason, and law in tradition has seriously falsified the moral question of sexual behavior in the minds of many people. The average person has associated and confused the question of the *morality* of sexual conduct with the question of its objective *legal* status. The reason for this confusion is, in part, that one finds a very easily applied objective norm: sex before marriage is wrong; sex after marriage is right. The difficulty of this norm can be easily perceived if we begin with the question of the moral quality of sexual conduct within marriage. The wife who withholds sex with a view to negotiating a fur coat is acting immorally; she is behaving like a prostitute, even if a legal prostitute. And the husband who uses his wife as a convenient instrument of masturbation, seeking exclusively his own egotistical pleasure, is immoral and remains so even if the act is open to the possibility of procreation. From these examples it should be obvious that there is something more to the moral quality of sexual behavior than the purely objective legal question of marriage, or even the objective rational question of openness to procreation. Something else ought to be present; and that something else is love. Are you using your sexual powers as a means of expressing your love? Are you centering your existence in the one you love and seeking his or her fulfillment in what you are doing? The human conforms to the divine image revealed in Christ not by acting in an impersonal, rational way, but by acting from a motive of love.

Human Freedom and Human Sexuality

It is obvious that the traditional moral theologians understood man's sexual behavior as rationally determined by biological instinct. Thus the only freedom they believed man to have in the sexual realm was the freedom to conform to the rational end built into biological instinct, procreation, or to

thwart that end. However, we have become progressively aware in recent times that human sexuality, like all human reality precisely as human, participates in the radical freedom of man. In forming their respective judgments, many moralists seem to ignore the rather obvious fact that human sexuality is not a totally instinctive and, therefore, determined phenomenon. Whatever participates in human freedom cannot receive its total explanation in terms of causal determinacy. Rather, it can be adequately understood only in terms of ideal goal or purpose. Man is freed from a deterministic *vis a tergo* precisely because he is able to project ideal goals and, consequently, allow these ideals to be the ultimately determining factor in his behavior.¹³⁸

We do not find it "contrary to nature" that man has taken the hands which biological evolution provided him as grasping instruments and employed them in the ideal creative pursuits of wielding a brush or a pen. Nor do we find it contrary to nature that man has used his mouth with its teeth, tongue and lips, obviously intended by nature for eating, in order to communicate through speech and song his most intimate aspirations. Nor should we find it any less according to nature, if man should use his sexual organs, designed by nature for procreation, in order to give the most intimate expression to his drive for union in love with his fellow man.

How, then, does man's freedom enter into the formation of his sexual orientation? We are born male or female, biologically speaking: but biological givens never determine human behavior precisely as human. We become "men" or "women" through a free human process of education. What it means to be a man or woman in any given society or culture is a free human cultural creation. Every culture has created its ideal sexual-identity images for the masculine or feminine role. Successful cultural adaptation represents the process whereby the young, unconsciously for the most part, adapt themselves to

the prevalent cultural image and expectations which go along with their biological identity.

More often than not in the past, these cultural identity images contained seriously dehumanizing factors. It is only in recent times that humanity has become aware that these images are not predetermined either by God or nature. As long as the cultural process remained unconscious there was little awareness of the role human freedom played in the formation of these images. Because these images were considered as either divine or psychological givens or taboos and their true character as free human constructs was not recognized, there was no hope of liberation from their destructive and anti-human elements. Primitive cultures tended to sacralize the prevailing images, seeing them as given by the gods. However, as Thomas Driver convincingly argues in his article "Sexuality and Jesus," over against the pagan gods and the pagan religions Jesus appeared as the great neutralizer of the religious meaning of sex; and, thus, as humanity's liberator from narrow sexual taboos mistakenly identified as divine imperatives:

I believe that the construction of a Christian ethic of sex cannot be properly attempted as long as one retains the mythology of sexuality that grew up in the ancient religions, is perpetuated in the new ones, and from which Jesus as the Christ would liberate us.¹³⁹

Since the sexual-identity image which concretizes heterosexual relations at any point in human history is a human and not a divine creation, theologians who absolutize the man-woman relation as the "divine image" in man are guilty of raising a human creation to the level of an idol. The task of the theologian, true to the spirit of Jesus in the New Testament, should be to liberate humanity to "the glorious liberty of the Sons of God," precisely by undertaking a critical theo-

logical investigation of sexual-identity images. As we have seen, the primary God-given ideal goal of human sexual development is that we should fashion cultural identity images that make it possible for human beings to achieve the fullness of a true personal relationship of sexual love in the process of conforming to the images provided by culture.

A growing body of evidence derived from cultural anthropology, sociology, and psychology indicates that in the learning process whereby humans conform to the sexual-identity images of their culture, a certain percentage, approximately one out of ten, fail to acculturate themselves successfully according to the acceptable heterosexual pattern. This appears to be a consistent and universal cultural phenomenon, the same in all cultures and in all periods of history.¹⁴⁰ Since it is the divine plan that humans should freely construct their cultural identity images, and since it seems to be a universal phenomenon that a certain percentage of humans do not necessarily conform to the accepted heterosexual pattern, no matter how heavily conformity to that pattern is sanctioned by society and the Church, I see no reason to assume a priori that the human who emerges from that unconscious learning process as a homosexual is somehow alienated from God's plan or in conflict with nature's design. On the contrary, it would seem more reasonable to assume that the homosexual is part of the divine plan and has an intrinsic role to play in human society. What that role may be will be the object of our inquiry in the second part of this work.

Paul Lehmann, in his work *Ethics in a Christian Context*, makes the point that the concern of a Christian ethics should be to relate the intimate reality of human sexuality in all its forms to the freedom and integrity of human wholeness: "What is called for in Christian sexual ethics is an approach which accents both the fundamental importance of the sexual act for the humanization of man and the setting in which that

humanization of man is a concrete and achievable reality."¹⁴¹ Kimball-Jones suggests that for the true homosexual such a setting can only exist in an encounter with another person of the same sex. Such an encounter is "the only sexual setting in which 'the humanization of man' can begin to become 'a concrete and achievable reality' for the homosexual."¹⁴²

Homosexual love, although incapable of procreation, is certainly not doomed to fruitlessness. Many homosexual couples love, and would gladly adopt, children if the law would permit it. Apart from this, it is certain that by means of a homosexual love many humans have been liberated to a truly spiritual fertility which otherwise would have been impossible. And as DeKruif remarks in a different context: "In the New Covenant it is given to anyone to be fertile in the new people of God through a love which surpasses even marital love in value and therefore in fertility."¹⁴³ We shall treat of the potentially positive aspects of homosexuality later on. First we must investigate the contribution of the human sciences to our moral understanding of homosexuality.

Pastoral Ministry to the Homosexual Community

The Failure of Pastoral Ministry

One final problem from the viewpoint of moral theology remains to be explored; that is the necessary changes in the nature of the Church's ministry to the homosexual community, granting the change in the nature of the Church's moral judgment on homosexual relationships which we have argued for. Paul Lehmann, as we have seen, made the point that the concern of Christian ethics should be to relate the intimate reality of sex in all its forms, including homosexuality, to the freedom and integrity of human wholeness. Consequently, Christian sexual ethics should accent the fundamental importance of the sexual act for the humanization of man and the setting in which that humanization of man is a concrete and achievable reality.¹ How, then, from the Church's viewpoint can it provide the spiritual setting within which the homosexual community can achieve its fullest moral and spiritual development?

There is no question that in the past the Church has made no attempt in this direction. It will be recalled that in its resolution on ministry to the homosexual community in Denver

in 1972, the National Federation of Priests' Councils reported that "the Church's concern for and ministry to the homosexual community is practically invisible and therefore non-existent in the United States." Consequently, the Federation voted to establish "a task force to develop a model for a Christian ministry to the homosexual community."²

The nonexistence of such a ministry in the past is easily understood. Since it regarded the homosexual condition and all homosexual relationships at best as necessarily "objectively sinful" and somehow contrary to the divine will, the Church logically has refused to grant any recognition to homosexual relationships and, thus, to the homosexual community as such. Individual priest-counselors and confessors have manifested genuine compassion and pastoral concern for the individual penitent. It should be remarked, however, that the priest, like the psychiatrist, tended to encounter only those homosexuals who have internalized the judgment of the Church and of society, and hence experienced their condition as somehow sinful and productive of guilt and self-contempt. And frequently, since the priest has himself shared society's homophobia, even that minimal human compassion for the penitent has been lacking. A few years ago a report by a Lutheran pastor on a West Coast conference on homosexuality carried the following headlines in a Catholic newspaper: "Homosexuals Ask Churches to Accept Them." In that report one of the homosexuals interviewed at the conference had this to say:

The Church is only for the majority and is always measuring up to conformity. I have no place to go, and it's impossible to become an atheist. First of all, every guy has got to have some place to go, even if he is not a devout and saintly person. Going to Church and confession sort of makes a person feel that he isn't alone. After all, a bed partner is only for a couple of minutes, hours or for a whole night—but God lasts forever. If the Church would only recognize that we are all members of the flock. They

don't have to bless homosexuality or say it's fine, but just say: You are a little spotted, but you are children of the flock.

Not only the homosexual himself but many professional people who deal with homosexuals believe that very frequently the Church tends to reject the homosexual. In the introduction to his book *Toward a Christian Understanding of the Homosexual*, H. Kimball-Jones, a Methodist minister and counselor whom we have quoted earlier, has this to say:

There are untold thousands of homosexuals in America today who are forced to live secret lives, forced to live in constant doubt and fear, lest they be discovered and labeled as outcasts of society. . . . Their sexual anomaly has made them potential criminals in the eyes of the law and sinners in the eyes of the Church. The Church for the most part has made no attempt to understand them; along with the rest of society, it has viewed them with great contempt, closing its doors to them, failing to recognize them as children of God.³

In their book *Counseling the Catholic*, Robert Gleason and George Hagmaier make the point that many homosexuals feel abandoned by the Church because of inept pastoral counseling:

The tragic reception which many a homosexual has received from a well-meaning but ineffectual or sometimes even hostile priest at least partially explains how so many of these unfortunate leave the Church in frustrated rebellion or deep despair . . . it is easy for him to conclude that the Church has abandoned him too.⁴

Gordon Westwood, in his work *A Minority: A Report on the Life of the Male Homosexual in Great Britain*, noted that 61 percent of his homosexual contacts had turned at one time to the Church for help, but only 6 percent said that they obtained help with their homosexual problem from their religion; while 5 percent more stated that their religious belief had offered

them some comfort. However, 81 percent reported no help or comfort from religion.⁵ As John Cavanagh pointed out in a lecture at Catholic University:

Many counselors look upon the homosexual with mixed feelings. They have been known to be fearful, mistrusting, resentful, and sometimes overcome by feelings of inadequacy. Many have frightened the deviate away with their rudeness and hostility. They may associate all homosexuality with willful depravity, seduction of the young, effeminacy, and moral perversion. . . . Because of these attitudes many homosexuals do not seek advice, which may lead some counselors to think that homosexuality is a rare thing. I have been told by priests of over twenty years experience that they have never seen a homosexual.⁶

Personal Ministry to the Individual

Most experts are in agreement that a clergyman, granted that he has minimal knowledge of the psychological aspects of the problem of homosexuality and is free from popular prejudices and misconceptions, can be of important and even essential help to the homosexual, and especially to a member of his Church who has this problem and seeks his assistance. More frequently than not, the person with a homosexual problem has introjected the attitude of society toward himself. He suffers great mental anguish and a profound sense of alienation, often believing himself to be an outcast not only from human society but from divine love as well. No person with heterosexual tendencies would be inclined to answer the question: Who are you? with the response: I am a heterosexual. But if he felt free to do so, this would be the response of the homosexual. Whether he carefully conceals his homosexual condition or expresses it openly, the person with a homosexual orientation tends to accept his homosexuality as his deepest self-identity image, the most important single fact about himself. And because he tends to accept his image from the atti-

tudes of the people about him, the person who believes himself to be a homosexual frequently has a negative self-image which leads to self-hatred and self-destruction.

Homosexuals will never be able to master their sexual drive in a positive way and integrate it successfully into their whole personality development until they become aware of themselves as persons of infinite dignity and worth, worthy of their fellow human's respect and consideration. In order to eliminate this self-destructive image and arrive at a positive self-identity image of themselves as persons of value, it is absolutely necessary that persons who have a homosexual orientation find someone with whom they can be completely open and still be treated with respect and love. What militates against such a self-disclosure, however, is the frequent conviction that no one will continue to respect them as persons if they reveal the true nature of their problem.

Logically, by his calling and his profession the clergyman should be the person to whom the homosexual could turn with complete confidence. And very often—some authors estimate at least forty percent of the time—the clergyman is the first person to whom he turns and reveals his problem. If, however, the homosexual should fail to receive a sympathetic reception, which unfortunately often seems to be the case, he could easily lose all hope. On the other hand, the very fact of being able to speak openly about his problem for the first time with a respected member of the community, who continues to manifest respect for him, can be an essential step toward establishing hope, where previously there was only despair.

Even when the rare clergyman who understands the homosexual and has the courage to offer his ministry can be found, the very fact that he does such counseling can effectively ruin his career and destroy his reputation as a clergyman. The National Federation of Priests' Councils notes that "individual priests and ministers, working with homosexuals, usually en-

counter a social and psychological stigma as a result of their work, and this stigma is the single most effective obstacle to ministers who want to work with homosexuals."

The Church and the Reform of Civil Law

There is no question that frequently the homosexual in the United States today is the victim of great social injustice. He is frequently denied the fundamental human rights to association, work, housing, etc. The first step toward eliminating these injustices is a reform of law. We have seen how a legal tradition of suppression of homosexual practices sprang up in the Christian West as a result of a misunderstanding of the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative. In a recent hearing concerning the reform of legal discrimination against homosexuals in employment and housing in New York City, one politician found it necessary to oppose the bill because it would be contrary to "our Judaic-Christian heritage." He attempted to establish this point by referring to the Sodom and Gomorrah tradition. The Church obviously has a serious obligation to correct such a misunderstanding of authentic Christian tradition in the minds of the public.

Practically all the authorities consulted are in agreement that there is an urgent need from a legal viewpoint for reform of the present laws in the United States concerning homosexuality. Such reforms have been operative in most European countries since the Napoleonic Code, without any evident harm to the common good. Great Britain recently adopted these reforms as a result of the Wolfenden Commission Report. In all but three states in the United States homosexual acts between consenting adults are legally a criminal act, penalized in some states with long prison terms.

At the time of the Wolfenden Report debate in England, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster acknowledged two "questions of fact" which, he believed, should determine the

question of law reform. "Catholics," he commented, "are free to make up their minds on these two questions of fact." The two questions were:

1. If the law takes cognizance of private acts of homosexuals and makes them crimes, do worse evils follow for the common good?
2. Would change in the law harm the common good by seeming to condone homosexual conduct?

All authorities seem to agree in answering "yes" to the first question. There is little doubt that the present repressive laws against homosexuals quite unjustly penalize a minority group and cause unnecessary and untold pain, fear, and suffering to many people who are otherwise law-abiding and responsible citizens. Apart from the fearful toll of suffering, lost talent, and mental breakdown, etc., the present laws considerably increase criminal activity by the opportunity they offer for blackmail, entrapment, and other forms of intimidation. A recent trial in New York uncovered a blackmail ring that had earned millions of dollars in this manner.

The type of abuse these laws lead to on the political level is notorious. The fortunately unsuccessful attempt on the part of one of our major car manufacturers to silence a prominent critic, because he happened to be a bachelor, and therefore suspect, is a good example. Further, by giving the homosexual community the character of an outlawed minority these laws encourage a type of aggression based in homophobia. On many occasions the illegal status of the homosexual has combined with an emotional climate to give rise to hostility approaching psychotic proportions and violence that is unequivocally criminal. Once exposed or even suspected, the "homosexual" may become prey to the worst forms of cruelty and injustice at the hands of those who regard their cruelty as righteousness. On numerous occasions individuals or groups of men have estab-

lished themselves "vigilantes" and have undertaken the practice of "queer baiting." One example, an instance which ended in tragedy for all concerned, occurred a few years ago in San Francisco. A group of young men (two of them from a private Catholic school) attacked, robbed, and assaulted a young school teacher they judged to be "queer." They left him unconscious on the street, where he was killed by an oncoming trolley—while the vigilantes continued their prowling of the city, looking for other victims. The inspector assigned to the case reported: "They said they considered Hall's death a justifiable homicide. They seem to regard the beating of whoever they consider deviants as a civic duty."

The moral question here concerns the source of the impression these young men had that assault and battery, robbery, and even murder are justified if the object of one's hostility is homosexual, or even only suspected to be so. Certainly even the clergyman who feels most strongly about the evils of homosexual practices has a duty in conscience to refrain from any words or actions which would help create the atmosphere in which such events become likely, or from seeming to give his tacit approval.

The American Law Institute in its model penal code recommended as far back as 1955 that private homosexual acts between consenting adults should be excluded from the criminal law because

no harm to the secular interest of the community is involved, and there is a fundamental question of the protection to which every individual is entitled against State interference in his personal affairs when he is not hurting others.

The second question of fact the Archbishop asks is much more difficult to answer. It is, perhaps, true that many people believe what is legal is moral and what is immoral should be illegal. This popular confusion between legality and morality

is the most serious obstacle to law reform. We have seen this confusion at work in the minds of many, for example, in the question of the reform of laws concerning abortion. The experience in the past with prohibition and in other fields has led the public to some realization that "one should not try to legislate morality." The emphasis in the Catholic Church since Vatican II on the right and responsibility of the individual to come to an independent moral judgment has also helped pave the way.

However, Christian educators and clergy cannot be content with merely registering a question of fact here. In the whole field of sexual morality there is a widespread confusion of morality with legality, to the serious detriment of the moral life. Most confessors and counselors are well aware how often the marriage license, for example, is understood as a license for an immoral use and abuse of one's marriage partner. Consequently, a serious responsibility rests on the shoulders of all who are involved in helping to form the conscience of the public to provide instruction in the ability to distinguish and to relate the moral and legal orders with their respective ends and procedures. This would prepare the way for a reform of law as well as a more mature attitude toward personal moral responsibility.

Some traditional authors express alarm that any let-up of legal discipline might result in a marked increase in homosexual behavior. But first of all, such legal reforms will certainly not contribute to any increase in the homosexual condition. There is no evidence that the legal status of homosexuality in any way influences the number of those who share this condition. However, there is a good reason to believe that the healthier climate that would result from such a legal reform could reduce the social pressures and consequent emotional disorders for those who share this condition. Secondly, there is no evidence that homosexual practices have increased in

those societies where no such legal penalties exist or where they have recently been reformed. All these considerations lead to the conclusion that the Church has a serious moral responsibility out of both justice and charity to work for the reform of laws concerning homosexuals and do everything in its power to educate the faithful to the need of such a reform.

The Goal of Heterosexual Adjustment

Once he has established a positive relationship of understanding and respect, the clergyman-counselor's difficult task has just begun. If the clergyman is to offer the homosexual anything more than the essential step of acceptance in Christ, he must have some understanding of the nature of the individual's problem. Practically all authorities agree that the first goal of counseling should be to guide the person with a homosexual problem to a heterosexual adjustment whenever possible.

The person who merely fears he may be a homosexual, or is attracted to the homosexual community, should explore every avenue toward the achievement of normal heterosexual capacities and relationships. This direction should be taken independent of what one's moral judgment may be concerning homosexual practices. Even the officers of the Mattachine Society, a homophile organization, agree with this aim:

On the basis of our experience—the embarrassment, shame and humiliation so many of us have known—we would definitely advise anyone who has not yet become an active homosexual, but has only misgivings about himself, to go the other way, if he can.

The reason for this advice is the many problems the average homosexual encounters, which make a positive adjustment to such a life extremely difficult. Among these difficulties can be enumerated: the typical homosexual's agonies of remorse and self-torture over what he feels to be his immoral desires,

whether these arise from conscious identity with the condemnations of Church and society or from neurotic conflicts within himself; his openness to blackmail and other forms of intimidation; his status of being outside the normal protection of the law; his necessity continually to conceal what he frequently believes to be his true identity from public view, with the added threat that accidental revelation could result in loss of his job, expulsion from school, dishonorable discharge from the military service, loss of future security and job opportunities, loss of friends and the respect of family and dependents. Still other problems involve his propensity to sexual promiscuity divorced from a complete and healthy interpersonal relationship; and the resulting tendency for sexual desires indulged in, but never fully satisfied, to occupy a disproportionate place in his life. Above all else, there is the very real threat of ultimate loneliness to one to whom all the normal structures of society—marriage, children, dependents, etc.—are closed. It should be noted, however, that all these negative aspects of homosexuality are not necessarily due to homosexuality as such, but are the results of both society's and the Church's attitude to the homosexual.

All these rather common aspects of homosexual life can effectively paralyze all initiative, result in a feeling of inferiority, and lead to an emotional breakdown which could make social adjustment impossible. Therefore, if there is any hope of heterosexual adjustment, that escape from the difficulties of homosexual life should be explored.

So, the first discernment a counselor should attempt to establish is whether or not a given individual is a genuine homosexual or merely suffering from "pseudo-homosexual panic" as a result of some experience of one of the many forms of conditional homosexuality. This discernment is especially important, as Hettlinger notes, in dealing with the adolescent or young adult. Quoting experts to the effect that "it is not until the age

of twenty-five has been reached or even later that we can be fairly sure that homosexual impulses are not just a phase of normal development," Hettlinger concludes:

Even if on examination a student has markedly homosexual tendencies, no one within the normal student age range has reason to conclude that his homosexual urges, however strong, are either basic or permanent.⁷

D. J. West concurs in this judgment, stating: "When homosexual behavior represents a precarious solution to current conflicts or reflects the pressures of external circumstances, a change may well come about."⁸ In such cases it is sometimes sufficient to point out the negative side of homosexual life and its obvious disadvantages in order to cure any illusions of homosexuality or any false images of a "gay" life. The author knows of one situation where a student-counselor was able to use the help of an older, well-adjusted homosexual to achieve this purpose with excellent results.

Whenever possible, of course, the clergyman-counselor is well advised to seek professional assistance in dealing with homosexuals. Where such assistance can be had, most authors agree that the clergyman himself should continue to see the individual and seek to offer supportive guidance in cooperation with the professional involved. In cases where the individual refuses such help, or for practical reasons such help is unavailable, the clergyman himself should continue his role as counselor and do the best he can. In this latter event, the clergyman should himself seek supervision in the management of his client.

Several moral problems face the counselor who accepts as his primary goal to lead the homosexual to a heterosexual adjustment. Among these is the problem of the danger of fostering false hopes of a cure in the mind of the homosexual. Despite the optimism of some psychiatrists concerning the possibili-

ties of a cure, there is little real hope that a cure will be effected in the practical order for a large majority of the cases of true homosexuality. Even Bieber, one of the most optimistic psychiatrists, reports that only twenty-seven percent of his patients were cured under optimum conditions. As Cory and LeRoy remark in their book *The Homosexual and His Society*:

Of those who came (or were sent) to Bieber and his co-workers for study, who struggled through analysis and underwent the torment and difficulties that it entails, many of them for literally hundreds of hours, more than 70 percent remained homosexuals. The writers are acquainted with hundreds of young men and women, and many older ones as well, who spent thousands of hard-earned dollars and hundreds of uncomfortable hours, seeking to overcome their imperious deviant drives, but in vain. The Mattachine Society and other groups have scores of members, some of whom readily admit that they were aided to face reality by the therapeutic sessions, but who were as overwhelmingly or as exclusively homosexual after therapy as they had been before.

It would seem that 73 percent of failure is a large figure, and that this is the realistic statistic that should be publicized in order to obtain better self-understanding by the homosexual and better acceptance of him by society. To focus attention on the 27 percent, as if it were a sure-fire majority, is misleading and dangerous.⁹

As a consequence the counselor would be well advised to admit the limited chances of a therapeutic cure in more serious cases where the conditions are unfavorable. As William Lynch established in his book *Images of Hope*, nothing can be more destructive psychologically than to hold out a false hope to an already disturbed person. The counselor should also emphasize, however, that regardless of the question of heterosexual adaptation, therapy can still be of great benefit. Well over ninety percent of Bieber's patients reported "improvement which was not directly related to the sex problem." There is

no doubt, then, that therapy can be very helpful to anyone suffering psychologically because of a homosexual problem, while in a limited number of cases it can result in a heterosexual adjustment. As we have seen, connected with the issue of false hope is the danger of false guilt, if analysis fails to change sexual orientation. As we have already pointed out, the great stress some clinicians place on the *a priori* condition on the part of the patient of a will to change as a necessary factor for the success of analysis could lead many into further depths of self-accusation and despair. For if therapy should fail, they could easily draw the false conclusion that the failure of therapy was due to a failure of their will, for which they are morally responsible.

The Case For and the Case Against Sexual Abstinence

There is another factor that seriously hampers the ability of the Church to minister effectively to the homosexual. Granted the traditional moral judgment that homosexual relations are always necessarily sinful and contrary to the divine will, the only pastoral advice that could be given to the true homosexual, who could not change his sexual orientation, was to practice sexual abstinence. In the words of Michael Buckley:

The aim of all pastoral counseling of the homosexual should be ultimately his re-orientation to heterosexuality, and where this is impossible an adjustment to his condition in the only way acceptable to Catholic moral theology—a life of chastity.¹⁰

Cavanaugh agrees with Buckley, stating: "A clergyman should be content to set as his ultimate aim the adjustment of the homosexual to a life of chastity."¹¹ It is clear from the context of both authors that they understand by "chastity" uniquely a policy of total abstinence from all sexual expression. Neither author seems aware that there can be a chaste expression of sexuality insofar as it is a true expression of human love.

All moral considerations apart for the moment, there is no question that a life of abstinence from all sexual expression, if that life proves possible without serious damage to the person, remains a good prudential choice for the homosexual in today's society. The dangers and the difficulties of an active homosexual life are so great and the probability that, owing to guilt and self-hatred, a homosexual relationship may prove destructive both to the individual and to the other person involved is so high, that every Christian homosexual may be well advised to try to structure his life without an active sexual relationship. As a result, if there is any hope that a life of abstinence can be successfully undertaken, then it remains a reasonable choice. It should be noted once again, however, that all these negative aspects of homosexuality are not necessarily due to homosexuality as such but are the result of both society's and the Church's attitude to the homosexual.

The clergyman-counselor should show a sensitive awareness of what he in fact is demanding of a homosexual when he urges him to undertake such a life of abstinence. For example, Cavanaugh's statement: "Just as we expect the heterosexual to be continent outside of marriage, so, too, the homosexual"¹² demonstrates just such a lack of sensitivity to the homosexual's special dilemma. The heterosexual's abstinence is either a temporary condition or one he has freely chosen; whereas the abstinence the Church would impose on the homosexual is involuntary and unending. In attempting to live out a life of abstinence, the adult male homosexual will first of all have to avoid any close relationship with women. Such a friendship in our culture would almost certainly be understood as a prelude to marriage. And if there is any advice one can almost certainly give in most cases, it is that the homosexual is morally obliged never to enter marriage while there is any reasonable doubt that he may be a true homosexual. In fact, canon lawyers are seriously debating the question whether

or not such a marriage would be necessarily invalid, since a true homosexual would be incapable of a valid consent to the marriage bond. There are many instances reported where homosexuals have entered into marriage, concealing their condition from their partner, in order to disguise their condition and win social acceptance. The tragic results for all parties concerned need not be detailed.

Cut off from close relations with women because of his condition, the homosexual is traditionally exhorted to cut off any deep, personal relationships with men, because they would serve as "the occasion of sin." Cavanaugh advises the counselor to urge the homosexual to avoid all former homosexual companions; in forming new friendships, to avoid any individual who is "sexually attractive"; to live alone; to avoid work with boys; to avoid entry into the military service; not to enter the clergy or religious life, etc. Indeed, he carries this type of advice to its logical conclusions by advising that the homosexual should avoid any "romantic" friendships, even if chaste:

One of the principles of conduct that an invert should formulate is that, because of his special condition, there is no value in allowing himself to form or to continue romantic friendships (i.e. those in which sexual attraction is a determining element) with people of his own sex, no matter how chaste the relation may be. Even if the invert is continent in these friendships, it is, nevertheless, a human love which can be never fully realized or satisfied licitly. It will, therefore, inevitably lead to anxiety and depression.¹³

In other words, in the pursuit of a life of "chastity" the homosexual should deny himself not only genital sexual relations, but every expression of warm human affection. Every psychologist worth his salt is well aware that all human affection and friendship is normally colored by a diffused, non-genital form of sexual attraction. Cut off, then, from all deep and affectionate female and male friendship, the homosexual

is literally condemned to a living hell of isolation and loneliness. And such a life is not urged temporarily, but must be sustained until death, under threat of possible eternal damnation. As black novelist James Baldwin observes:

The really horrible thing about present-day homosexuality . . . is that today's unlucky deviate can only save himself by the most tremendous exertion of all his forces from falling into an underworld in which he can never meet either man or woman, where it is impossible to have either a lover or a friend, where the possibility of genuine human involvement has altogether ceased. When this possibility has ceased, so has the possibility of growth.¹⁴

Cavanaugh somewhat tempers his advice, however, by quoting the following from Hagmaier and Gleason:

The uninformed confessor has a tendency to demand that the invert avoid every contact which might possibly be a source of stimulation for him, e.g., swimming, sports, stag society, artistic circles, male friendships. In many cases such involvements help drain off a more basic urge for physical contact. To stifle these outlets could very well precipitate the penitent into more frequent and more overt homosexual activity.¹⁵

In line with this advice, frequently those writing from a traditional viewpoint advise the homosexual to sublimate his sexual urges by committing himself to an active and productive life. What they sometimes fail to realize is that they have eliminated *a priori* under the rubric of "avoiding the occasion of sin" those very activities for which the homosexual is very often best suited, and by means of which he would have some chance of achieving a wholesome sublimation. As Kimball-Jones observes:

While he might stand the best chance of sublimating his sexual drives in professions such as scouting, teaching and the Christian ministry, professions which involve what Thielicke calls a "peda-

gical eros . . . a heightened sense of empathy," it is difficult for a professed homosexual to enter into such professions.¹⁶

There is a growing body of evidence that for a majority of true homosexuals sublimation and a life of sexual abstinence is not a practical pastoral answer to their problem. Counselors sometimes seem to be unaware of, or forget, the fact that psychologists understand sublimation as an unconscious process, which, as a result, cannot be the direct object of one's will. As Gordon Westwood indicates, "Sublimation is an unconscious mechanism and can be a useful aid, but it is rarely a full controlling factor. Whereas forced abstinence from fear and guilt often leads to neurotic disorders."¹⁷ Ellis and West both report sublimation relatively ineffective as a therapeutic goal.¹⁸ Marcus Hirshfield found such therapy to be effective in less than five percent of the homosexuals with whom he attempted it.¹⁹

Unfortunately, since the role of permanent confessor or spiritual father has all but disappeared from the scene in the United States, most confessors do not have any sort of follow-up on the penitents they advise. But those clergyman-counselors who do stay with the persons they direct are well aware how frequently the true homosexual who attempts a life of abstinence will go a month, a year, even several years, only to end up indulging in promiscuous, often compulsive sex, calculated to lead to social ruin and psychological breakdown. In homosexual circles the person who leads a life of abstinence in his home town, only to fall victim to the worse forms of promiscuity with all its inherent dangers on his annual visit to the big city, is a notorious figure.

The insistence of the Church on total abstinence as the only morally feasible alternative for the genuine homosexual who cannot change his sexual orientation has led to the paradoxical result, even if unintentional, of promoting promiscuity and

humanly destructive and depersonalized sexual activity among Catholic homosexuals. If a Catholic homosexual confessed occasional promiscuity, he could receive absolution and be allowed to receive communion in good conscience. If, however, he had entered into a genuine permanent love relationship, he would be judged in "a state of sin," and unless he expressed a willingness to break off that relationship he would be denied absolution. Consequently, the traditional discipline unwittingly tended to undermine the development of healthy interpersonal relationships among homosexuals and gave the appearance that the Church disapproved more of the love between homosexuals than it did of their sexual activity as such. One can see a parallel here with the similar paradoxical result of the Church's attitude on fornication and cohabitation. If a Catholic were involved in promiscuous heterosexual activity, he or she could receive absolution. However, individuals who entered into a permanent relationship outside of marriage, and thus attempted to establish a fuller human relationship, were judged to be in "a state of sin" and must be denied absolution and the right to receive holy communion.

Again we restate, if a person with homosexual tendencies with God's grace can successfully undertake a life of abstinence without destructive emotional conflicts and personality breakdown, then he or she is certainly well advised to do so. But what is troubling many counselors and confessors, as well as many moral theologians, is the realization that a majority of their clients or penitents who fall into the category of true homosexuals will in all probability not be successful in such an attempt, no matter how hard they pray or strive. On the contrary, the almost inevitable results will be tragic in terms of suffering, guilt, and mental disorder. The whole enterprise becomes all the more suspect with the dawning awareness that the moral judgment which makes such a pastoral practice

necessary is not so much a true moral judgment as it is an expression of historical and cultural prejudice.

There are a number of other factors which are causing many to question the absolute validity of the Church's traditional pastoral stance in relation to the homosexual. Surely, the present crisis concerning a life of abstinence in the priesthood and religious life should give rise to some reconsideration. If priests and religious, who attempt a life of chastity under optimum conditions of both nature and grace, are finding difficulty in ever growing numbers, how can we demand such a life from the average homosexual, who shares none of the helps or motivations to be found in clerical or religious life?

One factor which probably influences the absolute nature of the traditional stand has to do with clerical values and mentality. In an interesting research study into the differences between typical clerical and lay value systems, priest-psychologist William Hague discovered that whereas the priest is inclined to rate "salvation" first in his scale of values, the layman is inclined to place "love" first and give "salvation" a relatively lower rating. Hague makes this observation:

We find our identity in our relationships with others. One cannot base an identity on mere superficial "helping" relationships, no matter how dedicated or religious the motives may be. When a crisis comes, there isn't the personal human security there to withstand it. . . . Deep intimate human relationships are the ground in which personality takes roots and lasting security is found.²⁰

Hague suggests that this insight helps explain the number of excellent men—still very much in love with their priesthood—who have chosen to leave it for a more personal relationship of marriage. In an analogous fashion, many a homosexual is faced with the dilemma of continuing his relationship with the Church at the price of his loss of any deep human relationship and the loss of his own growth and development in

his personal self-identity, or of seeking his personal growth and identity by means of such a relationship only at the price of cutting himself off from the Church. Just as many priests are of the opinion that celibacy should not be a necessary condition of their priesthood, but open to voluntary choice, so many Catholic homosexuals believe that a life of sexual abstinence should not be required of them because of their condition, but open to voluntary choice.

The traditional exhortations that the homosexual can achieve sanctity by accepting the sufferings and difficulties which would result from the diminishment of his personal life and his psychological problems seem to be based frequently on a very questionable sort of dualism between human and spiritual development. They tend to negate the implications of insight attributed to Saint Irenaeus: "The glory of God is man fully alive." One recalls Saint Augustine's exhortation to one of the first communities of religious, in which he points out that "the foolish virgins without oil in their lamps" were indeed chaste, but their chastity was without love; they were incapable of a warm, loving response to the human needs of others, and thus were excluded from the kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of love. There can be a type of sexual abstinence which tends to be morally evil and psychologically destructive. There can be no necessary conflict between the human and spiritual fulfillment of man.²¹

What Kimball-Jones suggests is that if the Church is to be of any help to the majority of true homosexuals who cannot change or successfully lead a life of abstinence, then it must begin at the point where they find themselves. The question is not whether or not they are in a state of sin, but rather how they can make the best of a given, and in many cases, unchangeable situation. As Thielicke poses the question:

Perhaps the best way to formulate the ethical problem of the constitutional homosexual, who because of his vitality is not able

to practice abstinence, is to ask whether in the coordinated system of his constitution, he is willing to structure the man-man relationship in an *ethically responsible* way. Thus the ethical question meets him on the basis which he did not enter intentionally, but which is where he actually finds himself. . . .²²

Ministry to the Homosexual Community

These and many other factors have led the homosexual community in general and the Christian homosexual community in particular to a new level of consciousness concerning its needs and its rights in relation to the Church. Many Christian homosexuals no longer accept the traditional judgment that all homosexual relationships, precisely because they are homosexual, are necessarily sinful. Consequently, they are refusing the pastoral aim of abstinence as a necessary goal and, in many cases, as a desirable goal. As one group of Catholic homosexuals recently reported:

The primary purpose of *Dignity* is to help the gay Catholic realize that to be Christian he need not deny his homosexuality, but rather he *should* be fully himself in order to be fully Christian. *Dignity* will fight for the right of the gay to use sex his own way. We have no intention of side-stepping the issue, or playing it down, or steering our members toward a celibate life. We do not want people merely to accept us as human beings. We want them to accept the fact that because we are human we have the right to use sex in the only way that is natural for us. When that is accepted, we will be seen very easily as morally and physically healthy, patriotic human beings.²³

Further, important as individual counseling has been and remains, it is no longer possible for the Church to perceive its ministry to the homosexual as a ministry to individuals as such; rather, it must begin to recognize that the only effective ministry will be a ministry to the homosexual community. The Christian homosexual has an imperative need of a social and

religious setting in which he can begin the long task of repairing the wounds inflicted on his psyche by the prejudices of society and the Church, as well as the positive task of attempting to integrate moral and religious values into his life-style as a self-accepting homosexual. From their sociological study of male homosexuality in three countries—the United States, the Netherlands, and Denmark—Weinberg and Williams concluded: "Probably our most salient finding pertains to the beneficial effects (in terms of psychological adjustment) of a supportive environment—social relations with other homosexuals, their own institutions and publications."²⁴

The Christian homosexual is well aware that such a religious community can be truly helpful to him only if it is willing to accept him as a homosexual and accept ethically responsible homosexual relationships. The failure of the mainline Churches to provide the homosexual with such a community has led to the recent establishment of the "gay" Churches, such as the Metropolitan Community Church. These homophile Churches conceive of themselves as interim communities, necessary as long as the heterosexual Church communities are incapable of receiving, or unwilling to receive, the homosexual while respecting his life-style. The Metropolitan Community Church, for example, claims that it is "working toward the day when it can close its doors because the other Christian communities with love and understanding will have opened theirs to the gay people.

Since the founding of the Church, it has occasionally been necessary for someone to step outside the regular Christian camp in order to point out its laxity in adhering to the loving spirit of its founder. . . . Each of these moments of re-evaluation of the Church's mission resulted in advances in mankind's eternal struggle to establish an environment in which every person has the opportunity to fully realize and develop his potential as a human being and a child of God. Metropolitan Community Church is

following this great tradition of endeavoring to be God's special instrument in waking up the institutional Church to its lack of responsiveness of the will of God.²⁵

In a recent check on three homophile congregations in the New York City area, I found that a sizable number, perhaps even a majority, of the large groups in attendance at Sunday services were believing Catholics or former Catholics. Most of those interviewed expressed a strong desire to return to the practice of their faith, but only on condition that the Church would be willing to accept them as they are.

Among Catholic homophiles the most important attempt to date to establish such a community—one that accepts the homosexual as he is and yet remains within the Catholic Church community—is that of Dignity, whose newsletter is quoted above. In their original statement of Position and Purpose, the members of Dignity give the following description of themselves:

A. We believe that Gay Catholics are members of Christ's Mystical Body, numbered among the people of God. We have an inherent dignity because God created us, Christ died for us, and the Holy Spirit sanctified us in Baptism, making us his temple, and the channel through which the love of God might become visible. Because of this, it is our right, our privilege and our duty to live the sacramental life of the Church, so that we might become more powerful instruments of God's love working among all people.

B. We believe that Gays can express their sexuality in a manner that is consonant with Christ's teaching. We believe that all sexuality should be exercised in an ethically responsible and unselfish way.

C. As members of DIGNITY we wish to promote the cause of the Gay community. To do this, we must accept our responsibility to the Church, to Society and to individual Gay Catholics:

1. To the Church: to work for the development of its sexual

theology and for the acceptance of Gays as full and equal members of Christ.

2. To Society: to work for justice and social acceptance through education and legal reform.

3. To individual Gays: to reinforce their self-acceptance and their sense of dignity, and to aid them in becoming more active members of Church and Society.

D. Dignity is organized to unite all Gay Catholics, to develop leadership and to be an instrument through which the Gay Catholic may be heard by the Church and Society. There are four areas of concern:

1. Spiritual Development: We shall strive to achieve Christian maturity through all the means at our disposal, especially the Mass, the sacraments, personal prayer and active love of the neighbor.

2. Education: We wish to inform ourselves in all matters of faith as well as in all that concerns the Gay community so that we may develop the maturity of outlook needed to live fulfilling lives in which sexuality and spirituality are integrated, and to prepare us for service in the Gay community.

3. Social Involvement: As Catholics and as members of Society we shall become involved in those actions that bring the love of Christ to others and provide the basis for social reform.

- a. Toward individuals: We wish to live a life of service to others, hoping to render visible the love of Christ and contributing our share to building a community of love.

- b. With Gay groups: We wish to work with other Gay groups for the cause of justice to the Gay community and for the promotion of a sense of solidarity.

- c. With religious and secular groups: We wish to work with them that they may better understand Gays and recognize present injustices.

4. Social Events: Activities of a social and recreational nature will be provided to promote an atmosphere where friendships can develop and mature, and where the Gay's sense of acceptance and dignity may be strengthened.²⁶

The obvious reason why the Church has refused until now to recognize the Catholic homophile community is the persistence of the traditional moral judgment concerning the homosexual. It is my personal belief and hope that the Church will undertake a serious reappraisal of its traditional moral judgment, especially since that judgment rests on extremely debatable grounds both in Scripture and tradition. Further, the potential contribution which the homophile community can make to the human and spiritual development of the human community as a whole is a resource which the Church desperately needs at this point in history.

Moral Norms and the Homosexual

Such an acceptance of the homophile community in no way implies that the Church must drop its divinely imposed task of upholding moral ideals in the area of sexual behavior. Rather, the Church must and should continue to uphold moral ideals for the truly human use of sex. However, it must not continue to confuse these moral ideals with the purely formal element of heterosexuality as such. As Thielicke points out:

The primary moral problem in sexual relations is not sex within marriage versus sex outside of marriage, or sex within a heterosexual versus sex within a homosexual relationship. The problem is sex as a depersonalizing force versus sex as fulfillment of human relationship. Thus the important question would appear to be whether or not it is possible for the homosexual to achieve a responsible fulfilling relationship.²⁷

The same moral norms should be applied in judging the sexual behavior of a true homosexual as we ordinarily apply to heterosexual activity. Negatively, any sexual activity that involves exploitation of another person is unequivocally to be condemned. As a Quaker study puts it:

This is a concept of wrongdoing that applies to both homosexual

and heterosexual actions and to actions within marriage as well as outside of it. It condemns as fundamentally immoral every sexual action that is not, as far as humanly ascertainable, the result of mutual decision. It condemns seduction and even persuasion and every instance of coitus which, by reason of disparity of age or intelligence or emotional condition, cannot be a matter of mutual responsibility.²⁸

From a positive viewpoint the will of God for human sexuality is an ideal state in which sexual activity would be entirely dominated and consecrated by mutual love and devotion. Such an ideal is seldom realized in its fullness even in heterosexual relationships within marriage. Selfishness is never completely absent from heterosexual relationships. Yet the inevitable presence of this factor within a sexual relationship does not lead the Church to condemn it and advise a married couple to refrain from sexual activity as sinful. Their sex can be justified insofar as it contributes to the development of a fulfilling and satisfying relationship based in mutual love.

From a moral viewpoint, however, a further problem exists concerning the individual's sexual development. Most moralists argue against moral culpability for a homosexual condition, since they presuppose that such a condition is the result of an unconscious psychological process which lies radically outside the conscious and, therefore, free self-determination of the individual. I am inclined to agree with this position. The majority of homosexuals seem to experience their condition as a given over which they have little or no conscious control. However, insofar as freedom and an element of conscious choice can or does enter into an individual's sexual orientation, to what extent is he morally free to choose a homosexual orientation?

Michael Buckley and other traditionalists believe that there is an element of choice and freedom in the sexual orientation of most homosexuals. They argue that insofar as human free-

dom and choice can enter into and influence one's sexual development, one is morally obliged to choose heterosexuality. Some moderns would argue, on the other hand, that insofar as freedom enters into the sexual identity, the ideal is not to choose either homosexual or heterosexual orientation, but to remain potentially bisexual in order to avoid the restrictions that necessarily accompany a choice of identity.

In contrast to both these positions, I believe that the moralist should emphasize the moral insight of Kierkegaard: The truly ethical question is not so much *what* you choose as it is *that* you choose. One begins to be ethical only after one has made a real commitment. Kierkegaard's point is that God as absolute value is never given to us as an object of choice. Rather, we can encounter the absolute only by committing ourselves absolutely to the relative. St. John states forcibly that "God is love, and if any man loves he knows God." If true Christian and human love can exist equally in a homosexual or in a heterosexual context, then there is no *a priori* base for a moral choice between these contexts.

However, the real moral choice concerns committing or failing to commit ourselves to a fellow human being. The person who would deliberately remain at the immature stage of ambiguity in his sexual preferences will tend to remain uncommitted in his personal relationships. The failure to make a true commitment to another human person is, perhaps, the essential moral failing in all sexual relations, whether heterosexual or homosexual. We have already explored the prudential reasons for choosing a heterosexual orientation whenever that remains an open possibility. But the prior moral question is one of the quality of the commitment one makes to a fellow human person. Insofar as the subjective ambiguity of one's sexual preferences is used as a means of rationalizing a failure to commit oneself with fidelity in a genuine sexual love relationship, that ambiguity should be considered an amoral state.

However, for one who enters actively into sexual relationships to maintain such an ambiguity in order to avoid commitment could represent an immoral choice.

As we have seen, there is a considerable body of evidence—the Hooker and Shofield studies, for example—that many homosexuals have avoided the trap of promiscuity and depersonalized sex by entering into a mature homosexual relationship with one partner with the intention of fidelity and mutual support. By means of this relationship they have not only escaped promiscuity in their relationship but have grown as human beings; they have learned to integrate their sexual impulses in a positive way into their personality, so that these impulses become no longer a negative, compulsive, and destructive force, but an instrument within their control for the expression of human love. Catholic homosexuals are well aware of their need for God's grace in order to remain faithful to their commitment and in order to grow in their power to express unselfish love. This is the motivation behind their seeking a liturgy of friendship. The Quaker committee, after a long study of homosexuality, drew the conclusion: "Surely it is the nature and quality of a relation that matters; one must not judge it by its outer appearance but its inner worth. Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and, therefore, we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse."²⁹

Norman Pittenger, the noted Anglican theologian, believes that the primary spiritual problem that faces the Christian homosexual is his or her need, in Tillich's words, "to accept divine acceptance":

I should add that the homosexual who decided for a long relationship, as he may hope a life-long one, with another of his own sex, is almost certainly doing the very best thing that is open to him. Nor do I have the slightest doubt that God can and does bless the relationship. The basic question here for the homosexual is whether he will let the human love which to him

is so wonderful find its grounding in the divine Love, in God himself. That it is so grounded I take to be a matter of fact, so far as Christian faith is concerned. . . .

But to *let* it be grounded, to allow it to be consciously realized and felt, requires human surrender. So I should ask the homosexual, "Will you *let* God bless you? Will you *let* him work in your life and in your friend's life and in the life you share together?"

God made men to become true lovers; he wants them to be the best they can possibly be. To acknowledge this and try to base one's existence and one's relationships on it, in full responsibility, gives that existence and that relationship a meaning and a dignity which otherwise they cannot have.³⁰

The Positive Role of the Christian Homosexual Community

The recent militancy of the homosexual liberation movement has posed a new moral dilemma for the individual Christian homosexual. The "Gay Liberation" movement has placed a strong stress on the moral and social duty of the homosexual to "come out of the closet," to stop hiding his condition by conforming to an alien heterosexual image, and to proclaim himself publicly as a homosexual. Such a step, they claim, is necessary in order that the individual may win the freedom which will enable him to commit himself to public work for the social and political liberation of his homosexual brothers and sisters.

The Christian homosexual frequently finds this stress particularly challenging, since it gives concrete expression to the central Christian value of self-sacrificing love for one's neighbor, especially the outcast and the oppressed. He is usually well aware that it is most often selfish fear and a desire to escape personal humiliation, suffering, and loss that motivates his desire to hide his identity.

One presiding officer in the Gay Activist Alliance confided to me that it was the Christian value of committing oneself to

help one's fellow human beings and the Christian hope of being able to derive strength for others from one's own suffering and pain that originally led him into a religious order as a novice, and which eventually led him to take an active role in the Gay Liberation movement. A surprising number of those Catholics who are active in the movement come from a similar religious background. The call to an open and honest proclamation of one's own homosexuality and a commitment to work for the good of the homosexual community strikes a deep, resonant chord in the spirit of every committed Christian homosexual.

Such a public commitment has its obvious advantages; for it frequently carries with it a deep experience of joyful liberation, a freedom from the deceit and hypocrisy which so frequently poison the lives of homosexuals. From their sociological survey of thousands of male homosexuals in three countries Weinberg and Williams conclude that, all other things being equal, coming out of the closet can be psychologically healthier than trying to hide one's sexual orientation. Looking at the question from a moral viewpoint, it can be said that if one has a clear choice between two courses of action one of which is probably healthier than the other, one has a clear moral obligation to choose that course which offers the greatest promise of health. But "coming out" carries with it many very serious difficulties as well. Perhaps the central problem is the consequences of a public proclamation for one's family and friends. Most Christian homosexuals have found it necessary to continue to conceal their sexual identity from their family because they are convinced that knowledge of their condition would cause their family untold pain and sorrow and no good would come of such a revelation. However, a recent *New York Times* article noted that among young homosexuals many are revealing their condition to their immediate family and finding acceptance and understanding. Perhaps the most success-

ful and imaginative apostolate to the homosexual community undertaken by a priest is the effort of one priest in the Brooklyn diocese to organize the families of young homosexuals, who have been through the difficulties of accepting a homosexual son or daughter, so that they can help other parents through to acceptance and understanding.

Certainly, the Church should accept as one of its pastoral aims to help create such a relationship within the family. As we noted earlier, no greater disservice can be done to the family of a homosexual than to continue to insist on the unproven assumption that somehow the homosexuality of their child is due to a moral failing in the parental relationship. For such an insistence effectively blocks the possibility of a young homosexual being able to be open with his parents in a spirit of love and understanding. Rather, stress should be placed on the obligation parents are under to accept a homosexual son or daughter with understanding and love. As we have already said, whenever one has the good fortune, in counseling, to encounter a psychologically healthy homosexual, aware of his own dignity and his capacity to love and be loved, one can be almost certain that his parents, whatever their disappointment over his condition, have responded to him with true acceptance and love.

Unquestionably, the ideal situation that should exist between the individual and his family is one of openness and acceptance. But there is no easy solution that can be given beforehand to any individual faced with the problem of revealing himself to his family. I shall never forget the grief of a young man who, because he loved his parents very much and wished to spare them the grief of learning of his condition, had chosen to live in a distant city, when he received the following revelation at his father's funeral: before his death his father confided to a friend that he could not understand why

his son had moved away, and felt that perhaps his son did not appreciate how much he loved him.

Two factors must be weighed by each individual faced with this problem of self-revelation to his or her family. The first is the degree to which the individual can foresee whether or not his parents can bring themselves to genuinely accept him with knowledge of his condition. Secondly, the individual must estimate his own psychological strength. Will he be able to accept whatever happens in a spirit of understanding and compassion, and not react with bitterness and disillusionment?

Granting acceptance within one's family and by one's friends, there still remains the further challenge of deciding to play an active, public role for homosexual liberation. There surely are those among the Christian homosexual community whom God is calling to play a prophetic role in society in this regard. But here as in any prophetic role, such as the martyrs of old or the peacemakers of recent times, there must be a prudential and prayerful testing of spirits. The prophet must always pay a terrible price of personal suffering in order to bring about a true change in social attitudes. Before any individual commits himself to a public role, he must determine as best he can ahead of time what could be the worst things that could befall him: loss of his job, contempt and even hatred from society, personal injury, even prison, etc. And he must attempt to predetermine as best he can, based in his past experience and his self-knowledge, whether or not he has the interior strength to pass through such ordeals and come out a better human being because of them, and not cynical or bitter, a broken human being.

The prophetic function is essential if there is to be any advance in justice and charity toward the homosexual in the human community. Yet it can only be fulfilled under ordinary circumstances by someone who has the support of a loving

community. Consequently a Christian community, such as Dignity, is essential to give the necessary human and spiritual support.

Another function which the Christian homosexual community can perform is that of providing models. Homosexuals, especially the young, have a desperate need of models of what it means to live out a full human life as a homosexual. They especially need models of how to integrate spiritual and moral values into their life-style. One of the primary functions of social structure is to provide models for the young. The same social climate which forces homosexuals to hide their identity also effectively prevents any such role from being played within the ordinary structures of society. Consequently, there is need of a community within which the homosexual may encounter and come to know those who are sincerely trying to live such a human life with dignity.

One area in which the homosexual has a special need of both models and special counseling is in the realm of interpersonal relationships. The Church recognizes the need young heterosexuals have of special help in this area. Therefore, she has provided such services as pre-Cana and Cana conferences, and many forms of marriage and family counseling. A homosexual couple is even more desperately in need of such services. It is only within the context of a homosexual community that they could be provided.

The Accusation of Sexism

Richard McCormick, a moral theologian, states very clearly the primary objection of some moralists to a recognition by the Church of a homosexual community as such. He accepts the judgment of Francis Touchet:

The homophile organizations (such as the Gay Liberation Front, Gay Activist Alliance, The American Church) ignore the prime

focus on persons for a chosen focus on sexual preference and in doing so are guilty of an enslaving sexism.³¹

Consequently, McCormick views such organizations as jeopardizing an acceptance of the homosexual and as their own worst enemy because of their "monochromatic view." It must be conceded that any homophile organization that factually does focus exclusively on sexual preference and ignores the prime focus on persons would do a serious disservice to the homosexual, since he is frequently tempted to exaggerate the role that sexuality plays in life.

But I seriously question Touchet's assertion that such is the "chosen focus" of the organizations he names. First of all, the need for such homosexual organizations is based on the fact that the choice of a sexual focus and a sexual qualification of membership has already been made by society at large. There is at least an implicit, if not explicit, condition in most social institutions that one must be heterosexual in order to be accepted and fully participate in that institution. Nor is the Church exempt from such an exclusive condition. On the contrary, by viewing heterosexuality as the divine will and as "the ideal and the normal," as McCormick himself states, the Church has already set up a sexual condition which excludes the genuine homosexual from full participation in its structures. It makes no more sense to accuse the homosexual of an *a priori* chosen sexual focus than it would to accuse the blacks of a chosen skin-pigmentation focus or women's groups of a chosen biological focus. In each of these cases, as with homophile groups, the purpose of the group is to allow a focus on the person over against a denial of that focus by society at large.

Further, the fact is that the organizations Touchet mentions, although they do exist for those who are homosexually oriented, do not focus on sexuality as such. The Gay Liberation Front

and the Gay Activist Alliance both are concerned with the transcendent personalist goals of justice and equality. The American Church has as its objective to make spiritual values and a life of worship available to the homosexual. Obviously, if the homosexual existed in an ideal human society where true justice and love were present there would be no need for such organizations. And, as we have seen, homophile organizations tend to see themselves as interim communities; their ideal is true integration of the homosexual as an equal into human society. But until the time that such an ideal can begin to be realized they have an essential role to play in its acquisition.

VIII

Conclusion: Justice, the Church, and the Homosexual

The 1971 International Synod of Catholic bishops issued a statement, *Justice in the World*, in which they emphasized that action for justice is an essential dimension of the Church's mission in the world:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.¹

A conclusion that would appear to follow from this study is that one of the "oppressive situations" which call for action on behalf of justice is the situation of the homosexual. Although in all likelihood the bishops of the world did not have the homosexual as such explicitly in mind when they drew up their statement, yet much of what they had to say about justice applies to the situation of the homosexual.

The bishops recognize that the message of love in the Gospel implies an absolute demand for the recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. "Justice attains its inner fullness

in love. Because every man is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a brother of Christ, the Christian finds in every man God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love."² The message of the Christian homosexual community is that for the most part such a recognition has not been extended to the homosexual within the Christian community. The Synod insisted that, if the Church is to be credible when it speaks to the world, it first must be just itself in its own life. This practice of justice in its own life must begin with an unequivocal acknowledgment of, and respect for, the rights of all persons who together are the Church. "Within the Church rights must be preserved. No one should be deprived of his ordinary rights because he is associated with the Church in one way or another."³ Again, the Christian homosexual believes that he has been deprived of his rights as a condition for his continued association with the Church. Among these rights are the right of association and the right to be heard in decisions which affect his life.

The Synod acknowledges that frequently Christians simply do not see structured social injustices as sin. Consequently, they feel no obligation to do anything about them. As one commentary on the Synod document notes, we tend to ignore the fact that most of our personal choices occur within a societal framework which conditions, controls, and channels personal choice. So powerful and persuasive are these social situations that people frequently are not even conscious of their existence. They are inclined to see "laws of nature and of God" in what are purely human creations.⁴ As a consequence Church members tend not to accept responsibility for the social structures which embody and make operational attitudes of prejudice and blindness. The homosexual community is inclined to see the unconscious univocal heterosexual structuring of society precisely as a human creation mistakenly accepted as the law of nature and of God which results in prejudice and

blindness. Discrimination against women, the Synod acknowledges, has been structured unconsciously into the life and operation of the Church. As Archbishop Leo Byrne commented:

Women are not to be excluded from any service of the Church, if the exclusion stems from questionable interpretation of Scripture, prejudice or blind adherence to merely human traditions that may have been rooted in the social position of woman in other times.⁵

If the findings of this study are correct, then the Church's attitude toward homosexuals is another example of structured social injustice, equally based in questionable interpretations of Scripture, prejudice, and blind adherence to merely human traditions, traditions which have been falsely interpreted as the law of nature and of God. In fact, as we have seen, it is the same age-old tradition of male control, domination, and oppression of woman which underlies the oppression of the homosexual.

When social structures oppress human dignity and freedom and maintain situations of gross inequality, the persons who share life within these situations also share responsibility for allowing them to continue. There is, then, a need and an obligation to undertake a process of consciousness-raising, whereby these injustices and the structures that support them can be identified. "Education . . . will awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make men ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all men."⁶ Frequently in the past certain unjust social structures—slavery, for example—were defended and maintained because certain social values, such as stability and economic prosperity, were mistakenly understood as linked to the maintenance of these structures. In more recent times the inferior status of woman is defended and maintained for the same reasons. But once

the Church arrived at a clear consciousness that these supposed values were being maintained only by the perpetuation of essential injustice and disregard for the dignity and rights of certain of its members, it was obliged in conscience to reject these structures and do everything in its power to bring about a more just social order. The primary argument for the continued oppression of the homosexual is the belief, in reality unfounded, that the stability of the family and the moral health of society demand such an oppression. There is good reason to believe, as we have seen, that just the opposite is the case. It is the present oppressive situation which helps undermine the family structure by limiting the heterosexual to narrow and dehumanizing stereotypes and also by frequently forcing the homosexual into marriage. As Cardinal Carberry commented: "Help must be provided for the various minority peoples so that each group will not only acquire for itself that dignity and status in social life which is its due, but also will be able to enrich the other groups by the contribution of the riches that are inherent in its own character and culture."⁷ Although Cardinal Carberry in all probability did not have the homosexual minority in mind, there is, as we have seen, a potential enrichment of society as a whole which would result from the homosexual community being helped to play its role in society in a constructive way.

All members of the Church are called on by the Synod to be prophetic in championing the rights of individuals and groups that are treated unjustly and in calling for an end to all forms of injustice. Participation by persons in the discourse which affects their lives and destinies is recognized by the Synod as a basic right and human need. There is a special need to implement that right within the Church itself so that everyone can be heard in a spirit of dialogue. The Synod made the point that the action of the Church is to be directed above all "to those men who because of various forms of oppression

and because of the present character of Society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice."⁸ This is certainly the situation of the Christian homosexual within the Church itself. Consequently, the Church authorities should recognize the same right for the Christian homosexual minority that the Synod proclaims for all minority groups, the right of association and the right to enter into dialogue with authorities and the rest of the community. All too often in the past, the Church and its moral theologians have made a priori statements concerning the morality and life-style of homosexuals without any serious effort at dialogue. In this area especially the words of Cardinal Dearden apply: "We must freely acknowledge that the Church must learn and not merely teach what is required in justice."⁹ Homosexuals within the Church have an obligation, and therefore a right, to organize and attempt to enter into dialogue with Church authorities. Church authorities in turn should show an example in terms of just behavior toward the homosexual minority by displaying an active willingness to hear, to enter dialogue, and to seek ways to resolve whatever injustice becomes clear as a result of dialogue. It is only by means of such a dialogue that the Church can attain true consciousness of the injustices which the homosexual suffers and a real process can begin of separating the wheat from the chaff, the true implications of Christian faith and morality for the homosexual from the misunderstandings and prejudices of the past.

Chapter 3 - Sexual Alienation: The Dualistic Nemesis

Key thoughts from past chapters:

- The body is good! (p.19)
- Symbolic interaction (p.25)
- Sexuality can and should be the gospel incarnate. (p.35)

Key to Chapter 3:

- "What is impressive is the enormous control that silence retains in the sexual area." (p.41)

Body Alienation:

- loss of feeling (p.38)
- self deception (p.39)
- dichotomies (p.39)
- hence physical object (p.39)
- compulsive sex (p.40)
- hence alienation from self, others, and God (p.40)
- "performance principle" (p.42)
- "fuck oriented" (p.43)

Sexual Dualism:

- * Hebrew notion; sex is good, we are good! (p.47)
- female imagery is used for God (p.47)
- homosexual relationship in Greek society during Jesus (p.48)
- Jesus condemned infidelity (p.49)
- Eucharist (p.50)

Sexism:

- Paul - Thecla but subordination (p.51)
- Greek culture - mind/body dualism!
- Tertulian - marriage is not ideal (p.52)
- Jerome - virginity (p.52)
- Augustine - sex = original sin (p.53)
- Early Middle Ages - "penitentials" (p.54)
- High Middle Ages - legal regulation regarding marriage (p.54)
- Aquinas - sex for heterosexual, spousal, procreation only (p.54)
- Luther - marriage but submissive wife, controlling man (p.55)
- Calvin - companionship but submissive wife (p.56)
- Taylor - "endear each other" (p.57)
- M. Mead - destiny is not determined by biology (p.59)
- J. Marmor - behavior modification (p.59)
- J. Money - socialized roles (p.59)
- Maccoby & Jacklin - there are few difference between men & women (p.60)

Fears of men:

- Power of women to give birth (p.60)
- witch hunt (p.60)
- mariology - virginity/motherhood (p.61)
- H. Richardson - taboos regarding menstruation & childbirth separate men from their own sexuality (p.61)
- "castration anxiety" (p.61)

- R. Ruether - historical images of women: primary patriarchy, witch, women is spiritualized ideal (p.62)

The cost!:

psychological paralysis (p.65)
social control (p.65)
"feminine antifeminism" (p.65)
dominance and control (p.66)
sexist dualism is a "NO" to God (p.67)
and is works-righteousness (p.68)

The issue is in us and not "out there!" (p.68)

Salvation =alienation moving toward reconciliation.

Questions for thought:

1. What theological statement is Nelson saying about our bodies?
2. What is the interface of sexual dualism and spiritual dualism?
3. What is the purpose of sexual expression?
4. Why are we so often silent about our feelings toward sexuality?
5. What are specific ways in which we can make our bodies an example of the gospel incarnate?

diacy of God is present.³⁵ Christian faith is an incarnational faith, a faith in the repeatable and continuing incarnation of God. God is uniquely known to us through human presence, and human presence is always embodied presence. Thus body language is inescapably the material of Christian theology, and bodies are always sexual bodies, and our sexuality is basic to our capacity to know and to experience God. We have come full circle.

The case for a sexual theology rests on the assumption, therefore, that sexuality cannot adequately be considered merely as a sub-theme of moral theology or ethics. True, we must and will continue to ask what Christian theology has to say about the sexual body. But we must also (and at the same time) ask what it means that as body-selves we participate in the reality of God. Those acts and relationships which constitute the material of theology itself are inescapably intertwined with our sexuality—in our sin and in our salvation, in our dualistic alienations and in the possibility of our resurrection and human wholeness.

3

Sexual Alienation: The Dualistic Nemesis

Body Alienation

IN A CULTURE drenched with an emphasis upon "the body beautiful" and inundated with sex it may seem odd to speak of the pervasiveness of alienation of the body from the self.

Yet, a closer examination reveals unmistakable signs of the split. We experience the dualism of self and body. A dualism, like a dichotomy, is the sense of two different elements which may live together in an uneasy truce but are frequently in conflict. They are essentially foreign to each other. This is different from duality—or from its parallel term, polarity—in which two harmonious elements essentially belonging together are yet distinguishable and may exist in creative tension.

True, the line between duality and dualism, between polarity and dichotomy, sometimes seems hazy. Everyday language reveals this. One might argue that to speak of my body as an object or possession of the self—"I have a body," "my body," the body as "it"—does not necessarily signal a problem of dualistic division or alienation. This is simply everyday language for distinguishing the parts that are essentially me. It is possible. But our ordinary language

still betrays the dualistic threat. It is far easier, for example, to speak of "the personality" as identical with the self than it is to speak of the body and the self as one. "I am a personality" simply sounds more "natural" than "I am a body." If my personality (mind, spirit, emotions) becomes disoriented, then surely *I* am disoriented. It seems somehow different with the body. Ordinary language *does* betray the problem.

The dissociation of self from body is seen most dramatically in its psychiatric manifestations. Psychiatrist Alexander Lowen describes the loss of feeling in the body, with accompanying sensations that the body is strange and unreal, as typical in the first stages of a psychotic episode. To know who one is, the person must also be aware of his or her own facial expressions, body movements, postures, and body feelings. "Without this awareness of bodily feeling and attitude, a person becomes split into a disembodied spirit and a disenchanted body. . . . The complete loss of body contact characterizes the schizophrenic state."¹ Contrarily, the healthy self senses unity. The body as expression of selfhood is alive, vibrant, charged with feeling. However, as Lowen observes, "The first difficulty that one encounters with patients in search of identity is that they are not aware of the lack of aliveness in their bodies. People are so accustomed to thinking of the body as an instrument or a tool of the mind that they accept its relative deadness as a normal state."²

In addition to psychiatric manifestations, there is also a physiology of the self-body dualism. In days of public awareness of psychosomatic ailments, it does not surprise us when a medical school dean estimates that between sixty and seventy percent of those persons currently appearing at physicians' offices and clinics have no organic origin connected to their complaints. Yet, they are physically suffering, even though the root of the ailment is not in a virus but in the emotions.

Body alienation can be experienced as self-alienation in a variety of ways even by those who never darken the psychiatrist's door or for whom psychosomatic illnesses are seldom a problem. Two examples will suffice: the effects upon the patterns of our thinking and upon our perceptions of our sexuality.

The alienated body produces a mind detached from the depth of feelings. It becomes narrow and controlling, machine-like in observation and calculation. While this is more prevalent among males in our society (for reasons which we shall examine later), it can affect persons regardless of gender. And certain patterns of self-deception seem to come in the wake of our losing the vital sense of embodiment.

It is common to regard thinking as opposed to feeling. We contrast the thoughtful, rational individual with the impulsive one. What we forget, or are unable to experience deeply, is the emotional basis of thought. Of course, we can make a decided effort on appropriate occasions to think objectively, consciously attempting to detach personal feelings from our reflection. At other times we are aware that our thinking is highly subjective and colored by our feelings. On still more rare occasions we experience times of creative thinking and recognize that it seems to depend on the interplay of reason and feeling, it seems to occur when the body is unburdened and most alive. But a considerable amount of body alienation in our culture seems to be manifested in our thinking, as is evidenced by some of our literary products. Bernice Slote thus writes of twentieth century poetry, describing "its intellectual complexity, its concentration into cubicles of wit, its wasteland erogation of possibilities, its lack of physical joy, . . . (a) rigorously honed intellectualism in which the old worship of the soul has been replaced by the worship of the mind, but in which the same sort of exile is imposed on the body."³

Dichotomized thinking also seems to emerge from mind-body dissociation. The fragility of our sensed identities links with resistance to the complex and often contradictory emotions which come from bodily feelings. We become resistant to ambiguity and seek simple, single reasons for things. Our conceptual worlds become populated with dichotomies—me/not me, male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, black/white, smart/stupid, healthy/ill, good/bad, right/wrong.⁴

If the mind is alienated from the body, so also is the body from the mind. The depersonalization of one's sexuality, in some form or degree, inevitably follows. The body becomes a physical object possessed and used by the self. Lacking is the sense of unity with

head
feeling

the spontaneous rhythms of the body. Lacking is the sense of full participation in the body's stresses and pains, its joys and delights. More characteristic is the sense of body as machine. It is the phenomenon experienced by both the ascetic and the libertine (and both of those temptations in any of us). The ascetic experiences the body as a dangerous, alien force to be sternly controlled, even crushed into submission. It is "the lower realm," whose experiences and pleasures cannot be integrated into the moral self. For the libertine, the body becomes the instrument of sensuality. It is driven in a restless pursuit of pleasure. It is detached from the ego's vulnerability and capacity for self-surrender. Rather, it becomes an instrument of the partner's domination, a tool which wards off love.⁵

Psychiatric testimony underscores the connection between body alienation and promiscuous sex. Few of Rollo May's patients seem sexually repressed in their behavior; most have many partners. "But what our patients do complain of is lack of feeling and passion. . . . So much sex and so little meaning or even fun in it!"⁶ Similarly, Alexander Lowen observes the striking amount of body alienation in his patients, wherein genital excitation is felt as a strange, disturbing force to be discharged. "This results in a compulsive sexuality which is nondiscriminating and devoid of affection. . . . (But) when the body becomes alive, compulsive sexual behavior and promiscuity cease. Sexuality assumes a new meaning for the patient."⁷

To the extent that we reject our bodies we become uncomfortable in talking about ourselves as *body-selves*. True, we will share with a close companion news about a medical condition or a dysfunctioning organ, particularly if these do not involve our immediate sexual capacities. Even then, however, we tend to speak as if the body function in question were a thing, an object separate from the real me, a once-useful part of the machine whose operation is now impaired. Where the more directly sexual aspects of body life are concerned, there may even be a loss of the capacity to verbalize at all. In their research John Gagnon and William Simon have discovered that throughout adulthood most people remain unable to talk about their own sexual activity, even to their spouses in the midst of arousal or to themselves in fantasy. The incapacities for

such speech not only inhibit genuine sexual pleasure but also further cement the alienation of body from mind. "What is impressive is the enormous control that silence retains in the sexual area."⁸

When the body is experienced as a *thing*, it has the right to live only as machine or slave owned by the self. That to a significant degree this is the experience of countless ordinary people and not only psychiatric patients and subjects studied by sex researchers might be underscored by an imagined test.⁹ Suppose on Sunday the minister were to announce as the day's text Romans 12:1, "I appeal to you therefore . . . to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God . . ." Would "bodies" be interpreted by most hearers as the entire self (as Paul intended)? Probably not. Would the mood conveyed by that text be the prospect of wholeness, joy, ecstasy? No, more likely it would be heard as the injunction addressed to the mind or the spirit to engage in the dreary duty of disciplining and controlling one's body, imposing upon it from outside an alien willpower.

The problem of this dualistic alienation is further complicated by the fact that an oppressed or rejected body (whether for reasons of the ascetic within us or the libertine) becomes a nemesis. It seeks its revenge. We do not kill the body, we consign it to hell. And "hell consists of the dead who cannot accept their death," and so the body's ghostly influence continues, but in ways little understood by or integrated into the self.¹⁰ Deprived of eros, the body can become the champion of *thanatos*.

Alienation is the root experience of sin. It is always triadic in experience and manifestation. It involves alienation experienced within the self, of which thus far I have been speaking. It also, and necessarily, involves alienation from the neighbor. And, most fundamentally, it is alienation from God. At this point, consider the manifestations of body alienation expressed outward toward "the neighbor"—our human companions as individuals and groups, and the natural world as well.

What we reject in ourselves becomes projected outward. The figure of the devil most often represents what we will not acknowledge in ourselves, and in the late Middle Ages when demonography became highly developed it was clear that the devil represented the

the spontaneous rhythms of the body. Lacking is the sense of full participation in the body's stresses and pains, its joys and delights. More characteristic is the sense of body as machine. It is the phenomenon experienced by both the ascetic and the libertine (and both of those temptations in any of us). The ascetic experiences the body as a dangerous, alien force to be sternly controlled, even crushed into submission. It is "the lower realm," whose experiences and pleasures cannot be integrated into the moral self. For the libertine, the body becomes the instrument of sensuality. It is driven in a restless pursuit of pleasure. It is detached from the ego's vulnerability and capacity for self-surrender. Rather, it becomes an instrument of the partner's domination, a tool which wards off love.³

Psychiatric testimony underscores the connection between body alienation and promiscuous sex. Few of Rollo May's patients seem sexually repressed in their behavior; most have many partners. "But what our patients do complain of is lack of feeling and passion. . . . So much sex and so little meaning or even fun in it!"⁶ Similarly, Alexander Lowen observes the striking amount of body alienation in his patients, wherein genital excitation is felt as a strange, disturbing force to be discharged. "This results in a compulsive sexuality which is nondiscriminating and devoid of affection. . . . (But) when the body becomes alive, compulsive sexual behavior and promiscuity cease. Sexuality assumes a new meaning for the patient."⁷

To the extent that we reject our bodies we become uncomfortable in talking about ourselves as *body-selves*. True, we will share with a close companion news about a medical condition or a dysfunctioning organ, particularly if these do not involve our immediate sexual capacities. Even then, however, we tend to speak as if the body function in question were a thing, an object separate from the real me, a once-useful part of the machine whose operation is now impaired. Where the more directly sexual aspects of body life are concerned, there may even be a loss of the capacity to verbalize at all. In their research John Gagnon and William Simon have discovered that throughout adulthood most people remain unable to talk about their own sexual activity, even to their spouses in the midst of arousal or to themselves in fantasy. The incapacities for

such speech not only inhibit genuine sexual pleasure but also further cement the alienation of body from mind. "What is impressive is the enormous control that silence retains in the sexual area."⁸

When the body is experienced as a *thing*, it has the right to live only as machine or slave owned by the self. That to a significant degree this is the experience of countless ordinary people and not only psychiatric patients and subjects studied by sex researchers might be underscored by an imagined test.⁹ Suppose on Sunday the minister were to announce as the day's text Romans 12:1, "I appeal to you therefore . . . to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God . . ." Would "bodies" be interpreted by most hearers as the entire self (as Paul intended)? Probably not. Would the mood conveyed by that text be the prospect of wholeness, joy, ecstasy? No, more likely it would be heard as the injunction addressed to the mind or the spirit to engage in the dreary duty of disciplining and controlling one's body, imposing upon it from outside an alien willpower.

The problem of this dualistic alienation is further complicated by the fact that an oppressed or rejected body (whether for reasons of the ascetic within us or the libertine) becomes a nemesis. It seeks its revenge. We do not kill the body, we consign it to hell. And "hell consists of the dead who cannot accept their death," and so the body's ghostly influence continues, but in ways little understood by or integrated into the self.¹⁰ Deprived of eros, the body can become the champion of thanatos.

Alienation is the root experience of sin. It is always triadic in experience and manifestation. It involves alienation experienced within the self, of which thus far I have been speaking. It also, and necessarily, involves alienation from the neighbor. And, most fundamentally, it is alienation from God. At this point, consider the manifestations of body alienation expressed outward toward "the neighbor"—our human companions as individuals and groups, and the natural world as well.

What we reject in ourselves becomes projected outward. The figure of the devil most often represents what we will not acknowledge in ourselves, and in the late Middle Ages when demonography became highly developed it was clear that the devil represented the

sexual body. In male form it was the lustful Pan, with satyrs as attendant demons. In female form it was the witch. In both, it was the magnified and distorted image of the erotic.¹¹

In our less dramatically symbolic present age we continue to project outward the alienations within. Fear of the body finds expression in our daily patterns of human interaction. We distance both emotions and bodies from our relationships. Much of our lives is conducted with calculated disembodiment with rigid formalities regulating those socially-permissible public contacts—the handshake, the polite kiss, the elbow grip—even though athletes may be granted a temporary reprieve from such constraints following the crucial play of the game.

Separation from the neighbor is frequently undergirded by the dualism which treats the spirit as free and immortal but the body as mortal and corrupted. With this assumption, only part of the self is acceptable. If we are acceptable at all, it is not because of our concreteness but because of our transworldly divinity. But then the neighbor, too, is only of transcendent value. I then love that person as another occasion to experience God. However, if the other is only that, he or she loses particularity and value. John Fenton aptly declares, "Non-bodily theologies are anti-self, anti-neighbor, anti-society, and anti-world."¹²

Herbert Marcuse links bodily repression with repression in the social order. Reinterpreting Freud from a Marxist perspective, he argues that bodily repression in an exploitive economy has led to the stripping from sexual love of its playfulness and spontaneity. Love has become primarily a matter of duty and habit, with the blunting of sensuality its inevitable result. Under the bourgeois-capitalistic system, productivity, achievement and individual strength have become the chief virtues, and "the performance principle" a prime value. Drawing on elements from both Marx (the transformation of alienated people into things) and Max Weber (the psychological-spiritual need to perform and produce), Marcuse finds that alienation from society and alienation from one's own sexuality go hand-in-hand. Our sexuality is intended to be diffused throughout the entire body. The body as a whole should be the source of sexual pleasure—in responsiveness, feeling, giving, and receiving. Under

the pressure of the performance principle, however, our sexuality becomes genitalized, identified with specific "sex acts."¹³

Even if one does not accept Marcuse's blend of Freud and Marx at all points, his general conclusion is both defensible and significant: there is an important link between the alienation of self from neighbor in a highly competitive society, on the one hand, and the alienation of self from body through "the performance principle," on the other hand. In our society, there is an exaggerated estimation of the virtue of competent sexual performance in genital intercourse. (Witness the typical linguistic identification of "having sex" and engaging in coitus.) Corresponding to this, there is an underdeveloped understanding of sexuality as that which is diffused throughout the entire body and enriches all relationships. Rather, as William Masters and Virginia Johnson contend, "Sex, like work, becomes a matter of performance. There is always a goal in view—ejaculation for the man, orgasm for the woman. If these goals are achieved, the job has been satisfactorily performed. . . . Sex, for them, is not a way of being, a way of expressing identity or feelings or a way of nourishing a commitment. It is always a single incident, an occasion, an accomplishment. . . . (But) usually, goal-oriented sex is self-defeating. Sex interest is soon lost as the result of performance demand."¹⁴ Indeed, most of the street-word synonyms for intercourse reflect the technological mind's goal orientation rather than caring, sensitivity, and responsiveness. Body alienation does not nurture eroticized, sensitive persons who can love sexually; it produces technically competent, genitally-focused individuals who "make love."

The competitive ethos finds its solid grounding in the pervasive male sexism which affects us all. Men and women struggle against each other, often unconsciously, in patterns of dominance and submission. Women compete with women for male acceptance which society teaches them is essential for their self-worth. Men find emotional intimacy and tenderness with men threatening to the masculine, heterosexual image. Spouses find it difficult to speak honestly with each other about their sexual needs and anxieties, and performance fears invade their sexual loving.

In the larger social network and in our links to the natural world

the "undead" body also works its revenge. Later we will return to these issues in greater detail. At this point we must simply remind ourselves that much of the world's violence cannot be adequately comprehended apart from its connection to "machismo," that hyper-masculine image of toughness and power. We cannot understand white racism without recognizing its sexual dimensions. We cannot fathom our ecological dilemma without seeing how the dichotomy of spiritual and sensual becomes the split between humankind and the earth.

Most basically, body alienation is alienation from God. For a variety of reasons many have become convinced that in God's eyes human sexuality is at best a regrettable necessity. Not only has sexuality nothing intrinsically to do with our relationship with God, it can only get in the way. In part we are reaping the fruits of the ladder mysticism of late Greek thought, which had such an impact upon the church. To the scale of being there corresponds a scale of loving. On the lower rungs of the ladder, the soul can love God through creatures, but on the highest rungs, the soul loves God for the sake of God alone. "The soul becomes a solitary, uncontaminated virgin, contemplating a God who is the same."¹⁵ In part we are reaping the fruits of our fear of the material and of the inability of Protestant orthodoxy to deal with the category of creation. Nature is dissolved in history, and creation in eschatology. Then the body and its sensations, which *seem* to belong to the natural world more than to history, are religiously suspect.¹⁶

If through our religious socialization we have been taught that our sexuality is an impediment to the life with God, guilt may be attached to sexual feelings, often in unrecognized ways. But, in the vicious circle of things, hostility toward God may then enter—hostility because of God's rejection of that which seems (even in the face of much we have been taught) to be inevitably part of us.

The technical formulations of theologians, both for good and for ill, do have an impact on the church at large. If some years ago certain theologians shocked numerous Christians by declaring the death of God, some people recognized the partial truth in what was being said. Truncated *ideas* and *images* of God must surely die. Indeed, God is transcendent and radically beyond us. Indeed, God is revealed in history. But God is also and at the same time the

radically immanent One, infusing nature, expressing divinity in embodiment, rejoicing in sensual love. Why these latter dimensions of the divine life are still foreign to many, and perhaps at some level to all of us, presses us to look more closely at the history of our body alienation.

A History of Sexual Dualisms

The Christian culture is not the only one to have had problems with sexual alienation and dualisms. It is an unfair oversimplification to assume that only the Christian West has been thus afflicted while so-called primitive cultures and Eastern civilizations have escaped.¹⁷ For example, among the Manus of New Guinea sex was degraded and rigidly controlled. And the frank sexuality of Hindu art says little about the day-to-day sexual life of the Hindus, which has been governed by strict caste-based rules and prohibitions. Further, in Buddhism, even more explicitly than in many strands of Christianity, the rejection of sex and bodily expressiveness is counted essential to the attainment of freedom. So, the problem is not unique to the Christian story. Nevertheless, this is *our* story, and with this we must deal.

The individual histories of our sexual alienation undoubtedly are as complex and as varied as each of us is unique. Yet, there are two major common threads: spiritualistic dualism and sexist dualism. The two threads intertwine and mutually sew the fabric of alienation in both history and in the individual, but they can be singled out for identification.

Spiritualistic dualism has its roots in the body-spirit dichotomy abounding in Greek philosophy and culture at the beginning of the Christian era. Hence, the term *Hellenistic dualism* is also appropriate. Or, Jacques Maritain's word *angelism* likewise fits—the angel as the bodyless mind. Earlier Greek culture was significantly different in this respect. It did not view the immortal spirit as a temporary prisoner in a corruptible, mortal body, nor did it see the good life as an escape from the flesh into pure spirit. Quite the opposite, it saw the erotic experience as a basic key to the eternal.

At the close of the Greek Classical Age, however, a body pessimism had set in. Plato gave it lasting articulation. In the *Phaedo*

(speaking through Socrates) he writes in praise of "the man who pursues the truth by applying his pure and unadulterated thought to the pure and unadulterated object, cutting himself off as much as possible from his eyes and ears and virtually all the rest of his body, as an impediment which by its presence prevents the soul from attaining to truth and clear thinking." Further, Plato adds, "It seems that so long as we are alive, we shall continue closest to knowledge if we avoid as much as we can all contact and association with the body, except when they are absolutely necessary; and instead of allowing ourselves to become infected with its nature, purify ourselves from it until God himself gives us deliverance."¹⁸ This was the dualism which was to infect Christian understandings of the self, in spite of the holistic view of body-spirit unity and the person's psychosomatic oneness typical of Hebraic experience.

Sexist dualism is the second major root and expression of sexual alienation, intertwined with and at least as important as spiritualistic dualism. It was present in Israel of the Old Testament as well as in the early Christian church. It was the subordination of women systematically present in the institutions, the interpersonal relations, the thought forms, and the religious life of patriarchal cultures. Hence, the term *patriarchal dualism* is appropriate, also, or simply the contemporary word *sexism*.

The alienation of spirit from body, of reason from emotions, of "higher life" from "fleshy life" found both impetus and expression in the subordination of women. Men assumed to themselves superiority in reason and spirit and thus believed themselves destined to lead both civil and religious communities. Contrarily, women were identified with the traits of emotion, body, and sensuality. Their monthly "pollutions" were taken as a sign of religious uncleanness and emotional instability.

Rosemary Radford Ruether characterizes both the pervasive manifestations of sexist dualism and its intricate interconnection with the spiritualistic dichotomy: "The psychic organization of consciousness, the dualistic view of the self and the world, the hierarchical concept of society, the relation of humanity and nature, and of God and creation—all these relationships have been modeled on sexual dualism. . . . The male ideology of the 'feminine' that

we have inherited in the West seems to be rooted in a self-alienated experience of the body and the world, projecting upon the sexual other the lower half of these dualisms. . . . it is always woman who is the 'other,' the antithesis over against which one defines 'authentic' (male) selfhood."¹⁹

The Unfolding of the Story

A number of historians have traced the development of both dualisms in a variety of ways and in considerable detail. Yet, the story deserves retelling, for it is an important part of our self-understanding. I shall try to capture only its most significant expressions and developments.

Pre-Christian Hebrew life exhibited a minimal amount of spiritualistic dualism. To the Hebrews sexuality was a good gift from God. Indeed, their scriptures commonly called a person "flesh" rather than "spirit." Marriage was highly valued, though especially for procreative more than companionate reasons. Even so, the Song of Songs, as we have seen, celebrates the companionate and sensual love of a betrothed or married couple in a most delightful way.

Yet, body-denying influences gradually crept in. In part this seems to have come through the effect of Persian beliefs which correlated salvation with sexual restriction. But the historical situation of the Jews itself was of no small importance. Vern L. Bullough contends that the greatest period of sexual repression occurred following the return from the exile. "The most logical explanation for the changes in attitude seems to lie with the Jewish attitudes toward themselves. When Judaism seemed threatened, when the Jews, both as a group and as individuals, were insecure, their sexual attitude was the most repressive. When there was a greater feeling of security, attitudes were more tolerant."²⁰ Feelings about the individual body and about the social body do appear to be closely tied together.

If spiritualistic dualism was minimal in earlier Hebrew history, however, sexist dualism was present throughout. The culture was clearly male-dominated. While this generalization, unfortunately, holds true, it is not without exception. The Old Testament does contain critiques of patriarchy. In passages such as Genesis 2 and 3, the Song of Songs, Ruth, Jeremiah 31:15-22, and Hosea 4:14,

sexual mutuality is celebrated as the norm. In addition, female imagery is occasionally used for God, and Israel refrained from absolutizing its patriarchal life as a theological assertion.²¹ Nevertheless, patriarchy was dominant. Women were viewed as property in the legal codes, valued for their procreative sexuality, but to be secured and disposed of by men. Women were effectively disenfranchised by Israelite religious law: "the people of Israel" was exclusively the congregation of adult males. Extramarital sex was dealt with by a double standard. Economic rights were a male preserve, and sons were heirs. The sexual emphasis was upon male potency and the life-bearing power of semen: the male genitals were of great importance and were to be protected. In short, while angelism was not a pronounced fact of Hebrew life, sexist dualism was.

Greece was to exercise a towering influence upon Christian sexual thought and practice, although that influence came preeminently from the negative rather than the positive side of Greek sexual interpretation. The picture is decidedly schizophrenic in this sense. On the one hand, until the late Classical Age, sexuality and sensuality were highly honored. The Greek gods were thoroughly sexual beings. The Greeks not only accepted but cultivated the human body as a source of admiration and pleasure. The grace of harmonious motion in nude male athletes expressed the conviction that the training of the body was the training of the soul. Homosexual as well as heterosexual expression was affirmed, though the ideal homosexual relationship was a non-orgasmic bond between an older man and a young man. Religion and sexuality were intimately intertwined. For all the celebration of bodily life, however, early Greek culture was patriarchal and androcentric, with a double standard for the two sexes.

It is striking that a profound, spiritualistic dualism arose in Greek culture. Principally after the death of Alexander the Great it became powerful. Platonism perceived the soul as timeless, changeless, and immaterial. The senses were of no account in knowing the real world, and because sacred love dealt with the beauties of the soul while profane love dealt with the body, the true state of existence was devoid of any physical sexual activity. The ascetic

ideal was celebrated, and with it the renunciation of marriage and family, the downgrading of earthly ties, and the emphasis upon pure contemplation as the good life.

While the Greek world was experiencing political failure and their thinkers turning to otherworldly preoccupations, Rome's power was growing. Contrary to much popular opinion, the sexually excessive behavior of the Romans at the time of the empire has perhaps been exaggerated. With certain exceptions, they remained a rather moralistic people, emphasizing the importance of marriage and children and hostile to sexual behaviors regarded as deviant. But the Roman world in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era also underwent a dramatic change. Stoicism became its reigning ethical philosophy, celebrating passionlessness as the supreme virtue and holding the expression of visceral emotions to be a vice. Seneca, the Stoic philosopher and a contemporary of Jesus, taught that the sign of true greatness was the achievement of the state in which nothing could possibly disturb or excite one. To the Stoic sex was not bad in itself, but passion was greatly suspect, and the only justification for marriage was procreation.²²

Such were the major sexual inheritances of the Christian era. If Morton Scott Enslin's comment does not tell the whole story, nevertheless it carries considerable truth: "Christianity did not make the world ascetic; rather the world in which Christianity found itself strove to make Christianity ascetic."²³

Jesus himself did not proclaim any new sexual ethic. In fact, he explicitly disowned such an intention, and his recorded comments on sexual matters are few. Yet, his contributions were of inestimable importance and are all the more striking because of their contrast with the prevailing spirit and practice of the time.²⁴ Jesus explicitly condemned infidelity and divorce as interruptions of the Creator's intended one-flesh union of woman and man. He insisted upon the supreme importance of love and forgiveness in sexual matters as well as in every other area of life. Not of the least importance, in both teaching and example Jesus insisted upon the fundamental equality of the sexes. His consistent concern for the oppressed helps us to grasp his striking teaching about divorce:

women were profoundly oppressed when treated as property to be disposed of by male decree.

In Paul we meet "the apostle of love." We also meet one whose writings on sexual matters are marked by ambivalence. As a Jew, Paul affirmed a highly positive view of creation. As a Christian, he proclaimed the liberation of the whole human being in Jesus Christ. But as a child of patriarchal times he was conditioned by sexist dualism, and as a "Greek" he was not untouched by spiritualistic dualism.

Paul's letters emerged out of the context of a licentious cultural climate. His concern for sexual purity through dissociation from the idolatrous practices of the pagans is clearly understandable. Yet the evidence is strong, contrary to unfair interpretations of Paul, that he did not heavily embrace Hellenistic dualism. Speaking to this issue John A. T. Robinson asserts that the concept of the body (*soma*) forms the keystone of Paul's theology: "It is from the body of sin and death that we are delivered; it is through the body of Christ on the Cross that we are saved; it is into His body the Church that we are incorporated; it is by His body in the Eucharist that this Community is sustained; it is in our body that its new life has to be manifested; it is to a resurrection of this body to the likeness of His glorious body that we are destined."²⁵ Further, when Paul contrasts "flesh" (*sarx*) with spirit, it is a mistake to read this as unvarnished Greek dualism—the immortal soul over against the corruptible body. More typically, Paul uses "the mind of the flesh" to refer not to sensuality as such but to the denial of human dependence on God and a return to reliance on the law as the means of salvation.²⁶

Undoubtedly, Paul's great positive contribution to Christian sexual theology lies in the manner in which he elevates the sexual union in marriage as a parable of the "great mystery" which symbolizes the union of Christ and the church. This involves a remarkable psychological understanding of intercourse as an act which is not simply a pleasurable genital function but rather one which can engage the whole person in ways which express a unique mode of commitment and self-disclosure.²⁷

Yet, there is ambivalence about it all, and there are negativistic elements which were eagerly seized by later and much more dual-

istic Christian theologians. Paul clearly prefers the single state and tolerates marriage as a begrudged necessity. The most favorable interpretation is that he is here simply reflecting his vivid eschatological awareness: since the end of the age is near, Christians should live in keen anticipation, on tiptoe, undistracted by earthly cares and pleasures. But that the preaching of the kingdom's imminence ought automatically to take precedence over all else, including marriage, is too simple an answer. It makes sense only if one has—at least to some extent—imbibed something of Hellenistic dualism wherein pure love for God by its very nature must divorce one from earthly loves. Thus, for all of Paul's Hebraic understanding of the unity of the body-self, he was not consistent. When he interpreted marriage as a regrettable concession to human weakness, an unavoidable remedy for the highly sexed, a lesser of the evils but still an evil—Paul was a Hellenist.²⁸

Paul's teaching and example regarding women likewise is pervaded by ambivalence. Clearly he valued certain "sisters" as colleagues in the church's leadership, yet their leadership was not equal to that of men. To his lasting credit is his ringing declaration of the radical equality of all persons in Christ—"neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). Yet, at the same time Paul could readily invoke those traditions of sexist dualism which insisted upon woman's subordination: they should keep silence in the church, and while men ought not to cover their heads since they are the glory of God, women should be veiled for they are the glory of man. At this point it simply appears that Paul was operating with a futuristic eschatology which did not have a transformative effect upon social relationships in the present time. In the eschaton—the new age in Christ—there will be equality and mutuality according to God's original and primordial will. But until that new age arrives, Paul apparently is content to endorse the inherited patterns of sexual inequality so that "decent order" might be maintained in church and society.²⁹

It is only fair, however, continually to remind ourselves that particular biblical statements about human sexuality are inevitably historically conditioned. Specific injunctions cannot legitimately be wrenched from their historical context and applied in a mechanical manner to the late twentieth century. Our essential scriptural guidance must come from the larger perspectives of biblical faith. It

must come from the Bible's basic understanding of the human person in the light of God's presence, action, and purposes.

The Church Fathers in the first five centuries after the New Testament era were far less ambivalent about the sexual body than was Paul. By and large, they were simply negative. This does not mean that most Christians of that period felt and believed similarly—we simply do not know. Most of the writings from this formative period come from males at the top of the church's hierarchy, with few extant writings from ordinary priests and still fewer from the laity.³⁰

The Fathers were little concerned with a systematic theology of sexuality. Theirs was a much more practical interest—the purity of Christian life in a licentious, pagan environment. Still, they had to develop theory in order to give practical advice, and in doing so they reflected the increasing impact of spiritualistic dualism. Tertullian represents the more moderate position, declaring against the heretic Marcion, "We do not reject marriage, but simply refrain from it. Nor do we prescribe [single] sanctity as the rule, but only recommend it . . . at the same time earnestly vindicating marriage, whenever hostile attacks are made against it as a polluted thing, to the disparagement of the Creator."³¹ Jerome displays the more extreme dualism. He could accept marriage, reluctantly, only because from marriages (virgins) were born: "I praise marriage and wedlock, but only because they beget celibates; I gather roses from thorns, gold from the earth, pearls from shells."³²

Since the Fathers could not Christianly speak of two different creations, one spiritual and good, the other material and evil, they typically assigned sexuality not to the good order of creation but to the results of the Fall. Given this, the image of God could not reside in the whole person but only in the individual's unfallen or spiritual state, divorced from the body and its sexuality. The net result was the hierarchical view of virtue characteristically found in the writings of the Church Fathers. Martyrdom was the highest goal of Christian aspiration. Virginity and celibacy came next on the ladder, while the lowest rung was occupied by the state of marriage. Even within marriage, however, there was a hierarchy of goods. Since sex was always a danger to true Christian piety, the highest form of marriage was the dedication of spouses to each

other in total sexual abstinence.^A Lower was the marriage in which spouses had intercourse but only for the sake of procreating children and then as a conjugal duty not to be enjoyed as pleasure. Least good was marriage in which the sexual union was enjoyed. Thus, in the patristic literature spiritualistic dualism had won the day.

Of all the Church Fathers, Augustine deserves special comment. His imposing theology was to set the stage for many centuries of Christian thinking, including thought about sexuality (with which Augustine himself had a long and personal struggle).³³

Augustine was deeply troubled about the problem of sexual lust and was almost exclusively concerned about the genital aspects of human sexuality. Our subjection to the lust of "concupiscence," he believed, is a direct result of the Fall. One of the Fall's clear marks is that the genitals are no longer under our voluntary control, and our insatiable search for self-satisfaction (concupiscence) though evident in all spheres of life is particularly evidenced by the genitals' disobedience. Since Augustine sees a clear link between original sin and concupiscence, every sex act is not only directly connected to original sin (for which each of us is responsible) but also binds us more firmly to it.

In this interpretation every act of intercourse is inherently lustful. Augustine does give a marvelously accurate and vivid description of lustful, unloving sex, but, fatefully, he sees no power in love to transform the sex act in any significant way. There is something inherently suspicious about this act, for in the moment of its consummation both reason and will are overwhelmed, the partners out of control. Augustine could not fathom the mutual loss of the wife and husband to the ecstatic medium of their shared love, nor could he see sexual love as both analogous to and expressive of the self's communion with God. To the contrary, sex was the bestial appetite of lust, and for a couple to copulate for any purpose other than procreation was debauchery. If, however, procreation was its single aim, intercourse was good, for then it was being used for its ordained end. In this sense, compared to the radically anti-body, anti-sex Manicheans with whom he debated, Augustine had a pro-sex attitude. Yet, the cloud over even procreative sex

Augustine
U

lust =
genital

could not be lifted, for single-mindedness about procreation still would not dissolve the inherent lustfulness of every act of intercourse, and hell itself could be described as "the burning of lust."

During the Early Middle Ages we can find little systematic theological reflection on sexuality in the Western church. It is the "penitentials" which give us the best clues to the minds of the church's leadership. These handbooks for confessors, with descriptions of penances appropriate for particular sins, reveal a continuing emphasis upon the procreative use of sex. The Stoic mistrust of pleasure is still strong. Yet, here and there in the penitentials is evidence of a growing appreciation of the possibility that sexuality might have some positive role in Christian personhood.

The High Middle Ages (approximately the eleventh to fourteenth centuries) saw a new flowering of systematic theology and with it more systematic reflection on sexuality. By this time the church also had jurisdiction over the legal regulation of marriage. Marriage was elevated to a sacramental character because it symbolized the union of Christ and the church and because it was an ecclesiastical institution for procreation. But the divorce between the interpersonal dimensions of marriage, on the one hand, and sexuality, on the other, continued. While intercourse did not arouse the intense theological reactions characteristic of the Church Fathers, to the medieval theologian it was still the marital duty of procreation and not to be enjoyed. The rationalistic and legalistic mind-set was still too strong in that era's theology for sexual expression to be perceived as a unique means of mutual fulfillment and sensuous self-giving love. The greatest medieval theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, laid down a three-fold standard for the moral judgment of sexual acts: they must be done for the right purpose (procreation), with the right person (one's lawfully-wedded spouse), and in the right way (heterosexual genital intercourse).³⁴

Unfortunately, the sixteenth century's Protestant Reformation did not overcome the reigning spiritualistic dualism in Christian thought on matters sexual.³⁵ While the Reformers' approach was largely practical, they reintroduced a major theological emphasis which carried sexual implications: the emphasis upon justification by grace rather than by virtue or works of the law. This led both Luther and Calvin to undercut the cult of virginity and the notion of

meritorious sexual celibacy, and hence marriage was lifted to a new level of theological affirmation.

Nevertheless, ambivalence about sexuality remained. Luther himself was a curious mixture of the radical and the conservative in this regard. Marriage, he believed, is an honorable estate ordained by God for all (with the very few exceptions of those who can remain virginal for the kingdom). It is to be commended with enthusiasm as a great divine gift in which the relationship of husband and wife can be a heavenly school of love. Yet, Luther also saw marriage as a necessity because the power of the libidinal drives is so strong that few can resist sex. Hence, in spite of his eulogies of marriage, Luther could also term it an "emergency hospital for the illness of human drives."

A positive affirmation of sexuality evaded him. Every sexual act recapitulated the sinful effects of the Fall, and no "marital duty" could be discharged without sin. Luther's hearty realism about the strength of sexual urges (undoubtedly strongly felt in himself) made him less willing than many others to condemn those whose sex expression was not entirely monogamous. In any event, sexuality was always married to lust in the fallen human being. If lust at times was a mad and raging animal that must be allowed to run its course, regrettably that must be. Yet the strange work of God is this: in a married couple's sexual desire, however corrupted it remains, they find God's pardon and permission, for through marital intercourse the divine will propagates the race and restrains human vice.

John Calvin's differences from Luther were largely matters of emphasis, with one major exception: companionship, rather than procreation and the restraint of lust, was God's chief intention for marriage. To Luther the wife tended to be the bearer of the husband's children and the provider of his sexual relief. While Calvin still subordinated the woman in status and expressed his own share of sexist dualism, he argued that she was to be her husband's inseparable companion in life and work. (He did not, of course, argue that the husband was destined to be his wife's inseparable companion in life and work.)

Calvin was less pessimistic about sex than was Luther. If Luther principally sought to confine the raging power within marriage, the

Geneva reformer believed that sex could have constructive effects. Thus he rejected any false prudery about marital sex and insisted on mutual agreement between spouses concerning their sex acts. But Calvin, too, continued some of the traditional suspicion of sexuality, and spiritualistic as well as sexist dualism was present in his writings on the subject. His attempts to control the sexual drives led him into moralism and legalism on the subject. In the final analysis, sex was not really to be enjoyed by the spouses; it was to be kept within the rigid bounds of "delicacy and propriety."

Though modest, there were some Reformation advances in lessening the massive spiritualistic dualism of early Christian centuries. In regard to the subordination of women, however, there were some retrogressive tendencies. Prior to the Reformation, unmarried women had theological blessing to be independent of men—living as nuns and making their own contributions to the life of the church. Now for Protestants the housewifely ideal was given divine sanction, and it was that ideal which saw the woman principally restricted to children, kitchen, and church (in German, "the three-K mentality"—Kinder, Küche, Kirche). While Calvin believed that he saw the woman positively, as the lifelong companion of the man, it was she who was his companion, his "helper," his "support." She was to contribute "thoughtfulness and tranquility" while the man was to furnish "wisdom."³⁶ Furthermore, the Reformers turned to the Old Testament patriarchs for their model of the Christian family. If the great Hebrew kings furnished the appropriate pattern for "the godly prince" of Europe in the sixteenth century, so also the households of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (except for their polygamy) should be family images for Reformation Christians. But such patterns not only perpetuated the submission of wives to husbands; they also gave the father an almost magisterial authority in regard to disciplining "his" children.³⁷

In Roman Catholic thought no major changes in official teachings about sexuality emerged from the sixteenth century to the mid-twentieth. In the late medieval period, William of Occam had given impetus to a certain style of moral theology: teaching moral duties according to a negative interpretation of the Ten Commandments rather than in regard to the positive virtues. This negative framework applied to the teaching of sexual morality as well, and over the

centuries the church's moral manuals came to be dominated by the delineation of sexual "thou-shalt-nots." Procreation continued as the only legitimation of sexual activity. Further, the medievalists' prominent distinction between acts "in accordance with nature" and acts "contrary to nature" was diligently maintained. The former type of sexual act preserved the procreative possibility; hence, a sexual sin in accordance with nature was a lesser violation of the moral order than was that sin contrary to nature in which procreation was impossible. The lesser violations (though still serious sins) included fornication, adultery, incest, and rape. Acts contrary to nature included masturbation, homosexual acts, and bestiality.³⁸ The curious conclusion to which such reasoning could lead is that masturbation is a greater moral evil than is rape.

In the centuries following the Reformation, the most significant Protestant development was the increasing awareness that sexual intercourse had values quite independent of procreation. In the seventeenth century, for example, the Anglican ecclesiastic and theologian Jeremy Taylor spoke to the relational values of physical sexuality: "to lighten and ease the cares and sadnesses of household affairs" and "to endear each other."³⁹ From the Puritan side, poet John Milton—in spite of his pronounced subordinationism regarding women—could express the conviction that the sexual union of spouses could be a prefiguring of the heavenly realm. And in his depiction of the heavenly vision in *Paradise Regained*, the sensuous and the spiritual are blended together in a manner reminiscent of ancient Semitic imagery.⁴⁰

That in the Christian tradition there are positive sources of insight in regard to our sexual salvation is evident in the preceding survey. But, obviously, my accent has been upon the negative. At this point it is important that we face honestly those elements of our common tradition which have contributed to the sexual alienation we presently experience. In spite of the church's gradually growing valuation of the place of the sexual relationship in marriage and in spite of its striving toward a single standard of moral integrity, the pervasiveness of both spiritualistic and sexist dualisms can be read in bold type on the pages of our Christian past.

Yet, until the recent work of feminist theologians, it was spiritualistic dualism which received the lion's share of attention in his-

acc'd to
Nature
Contrary
Nature

tories of Christian sexuality. For one thing, it seemed easier to understand why this particular dualism had made its inroads. The typical interpretation—valid as far as it went—was this: The more unified view of selfhood and more positive view of sexuality characteristic of the Hebrews did not have a chance to become rooted adequately in the Christian community. The Hebrews were one people with a cultural unity expressing both faith and morality. But the Christian church had the more complex task of relating to many cultures as it attempted to become a universal community. Beginning as a small group expecting the imminent coming of the kingdom, a group which could afford a large measure of indifference to secular society, it then became the religion of a world empire. As such it tried to maintain its integrity in a Hellenistic world, borrowing from, adjusting to, and interpreting through the thought forms and values of that cosmopolitan world. Thus, the church, as its own blends of thought became increasingly rooted in its life, failed to develop the positive understanding of sexuality which a biblical view of life implies.⁴¹

Such an interpretation has validity. But it is incomplete. It does account for some of the lasting impact of spiritualistic dualism. Yet, what it leaves unspoken is the fact that sexist dualism has been closely interwoven with angelism throughout the centuries. Indeed, the alienation produced by man-over-woman has both nurtured and given persistence to the alienation of spirit-over-body.

A Further Look at Sexist Dualism

Women are identified with body, and men with spirit. The connection between the two dualisms is painfully obvious. Women are perceived as lacking in the capacity for autonomy, for rationality, for will power. Dependency and irrationality, passivity and sensuality (all characteristics of repressed bodiliness) are assumed to be their defining characteristics. And the alien woman then becomes the model for the perception of other subjugated groups, classes, castes, and races.⁴²

It is true that alienation is sin, and at its root there remains something mysterious and inexplicable. Yet, we can understand, at least in some significant part, why our alienation takes certain

forms. Why has the dichotomy of man-over-woman arisen, and what gives to it its stubborn persistence?

At the outset, the possibility that there are biologically-given differences between men and women which will account for this phenomenon must be raised. Yet, the available research strongly indicates that this is not the answer. The evidence comes from a variety of disciplines:

- From her anthropological studies, Margaret Mead concludes: "Many, if not all, of the personality traits which we have called masculine or feminine are as lightly linked to sex as are the clothing, the manners, and the form of headdress that a society at a given period assigns to either sex."⁴³

- Psychiatrist Judd Marmor puts it this way: "As one moves up in the evolutionary scale . . . one finds that inherited instinctual patterns become less complex but more subject to modification by learning. This development reaches its apogee in human beings, who are born, not with complex instinctual adaptive patterns, but with relatively unfocused basic biological drives. The direction these drives take in human beings and the objects to which they become attached are subject to enormous modifications by learning."⁴⁴

- John Money's research at the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic has dramatically indicated the immense power of social and psychological influences upon a person's sense of being either female or male, not to mention traits of "femininity" and "masculinity." Even the basic gender difference is not simply biologically-given. If (as has happened) a child has been reared as a member of the other sex, that child will continue to experience himself or herself as a member of the "wrong" sex throughout life, regardless of that person's biological construction. Money concludes that "sex differences are relative, not absolute. They can be assigned however we wish, as long as we allow for two simple facts: first, that men impregnate, women menstruate, gestate, and lactate; and second, that adult individuals cannot alter the nuclear core of their gender schemes."⁴⁵

• A major review of the available literature on psychological similarities and differences between the sexes by Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin concludes with a similar judgment. There are a few identifiable differences in average men and women, but only in two areas. In intellectual skills women tend to exhibit higher verbal abilities and men higher abilities in mathematical and visual-spatial tasks. And, on the average, men seem to have a biological basis for greater readiness to learn aggressive behavior, though this does not mean greater aggression *per se*. On the whole, however, no discernible differences appear to exist between men and women even in areas wherein they are commonly believed to be present: analytical abilities, self-esteem, suggestibility, achievement orientation, nurturing capacities, social orientation, and the like.⁴⁶

If inherent biological and genetic differences do not adequately account for sexist dualism, we must turn elsewhere. Several plausible and overlapping theories deserve reflection.

One possibility has to do with the awesomeness (and hence fear) which men have felt about the biological powers of women.⁴⁷ While the common prejudice, buttressed by Freud, holds that the woman envies the man's strength, and particularly his penis, a persuasive argument points in quite the opposite direction. Throughout history, men have harbored feelings of inferiority because of the special powers which women seem to have, especially the capacity for pregnancy and giving birth. Historically, if women were seen as creatures with special supernatural gifts, two types of responses appeared open to men: adoring the woman as divine or treating her as demonic. Both have occurred, and both have found ample expression in Christian theology.

Fear of the demonic is evident in the Church Father Tertullian, who called woman "the gate of Hell." Pettus Damiani, an eleventh century monk, described women as "bait of Satan, by-product of paradise, poison in our food, source of sin, temptresses, whores of lust, sirens, and chief witches."⁴⁸ The *Malleus Maleficarum*, written as a handbook for the persecution of witches, portrayed women as inherently defective and perverse, and, after the Fall, doubly prone to the demonic. This fate was escaped by men because of the maleness of Jesus, according to the authors, two fifteenth cen-

tury Dominican inquisitors.⁴⁹ The other side of the picture, the worship of woman, is best illustrated in the cult of Mary. With its emphases upon both virginity and motherhood, Mariology accents two common strands in the persisting male attitudes toward women: purity and the capacity to produce children for their men.

A second and related hypothesis is likewise connected to the male anxiety in the face of women's sexual power. In this suggestion, the oppression of women is linked with the transition of tribal societies into urban societies.⁵⁰ In the early tribal society people considered themselves part of nature, imitating the biological processes in their environment. Women held a place of coeminence with men, for their fertility was essential to the ongoing life of the tribe; sexual creation was primary inasmuch as the family was coextensive with all other institutions.

However, the break from the kinship tribe—the courage of Abraham to leave his tribal home to establish a new nation—required an important psychological development. The bondage to nature must be broken and a new basis of society realized. For the Israelites this new basis was Law and Covenant, the primacy of legal over biological power. But this struggle to break with the earlier biological consciousness led men to project that very consciousness upon women. It was women, now, who were the biological beings from whom men must be separated and in relation to whom men must be superior. Thus a series of ritual taboos arose which marked women, particularly during menstruation and childbirth, as "unclean." According to Herbert W. Richardson, "Through these taboos, the male not only separates himself from the sexuality of the female, but separates himself from his own instinctive sexuality. He attains, in this way, a more-than-sexual identity . . . a new definition of himself: as one created not in the image of any biological thing, but as a being sharing in the covenanting-legal power that rules the universe."⁵¹

A third and related theory focuses upon the man's more direct sexual fears of the woman, especially in intercourse itself. The notion of "castration anxiety" is psychologically commonplace and relevant: the penis must enter the vagina, literally be engulfed by it in coitus, and this may arouse subconscious castration fears. In addition, however, men feel threatened in other ways. For inter-

course to be achieved, the man must "perform." He must produce and maintain an erection, and the threat of impotence is ever present. But in this sense, the woman never "fails," and in some strange biological sense she always "wins" in the sex act. The male organ is reduced to flaccidity and, for a time, to incapacity, while the woman is capable of sustained sexual activity. Anxious and jealous, the man retaliates with assumptions of his own superiority. Indeed, the anxiety he feels in face of his partner's sexual power threatens to make him impotent, but by the transformation of that anxiety into aggression he can perform, he can dominate, and he can penetrate.

The plausibility of such theories as these, all finding the roots of sexist dualism somehow located in man's anxieties in the face of woman's sexuality, is enhanced when one reflects on the psychic strata of our sexual history. Rosemary Ruether has identified three psychic layers, all not equally pronounced in any given historical period, but all present.⁵² One is the notion of women as quasi-property, as servants, and as permanent dependents of men. This is "primary patriarchy" in which it is assumed that women can never grow up to become autonomous persons. The second layer identifies woman as body in the sense of carnality and evil. Now the servant becomes the witch, for the body is demonically alien to men who have identified themselves primarily as mind and spirit. Here, Hellenistic dualism dramatically interlaces with sexism. In the third psychic stratum woman is the spiritualized ideal. She is pure, and at once both mother and virgin. Now it is she who is the guardian of religion and morality in the private sphere of the home, though "the real world" (which belongs to men) lies elsewhere.

In addition to these broad theories and historical overviews concerning sexist dualism, particular facets of our Christian heritage illuminate its entrenchment and its continuing power. One example from the Roman Catholic side and a second from the Protestant past will illustrate.

The manner in which biological misinformation can become ensconced in religious doctrine is the first case in point. Our accurate knowledge of certain major biological facts about reproduction is a relatively recent acquisition. It was not until 1827 that the mammalian ovum was clearly observed and recognized for what it

was. By 1879 scientists had observed the penetration of an egg by a spermatozoon of a starfish. But only in the present century has reproductive and genetic science clearly demonstrated the biological contributions of the female as well as of the male to the creation of offspring.

However, Christian sexual thought, in this instance through Roman Catholic tradition, has been deeply colored by Aristotle's primitive biological theories.⁵³ Aristotle analyzed the body as a union of form and matter. The mother (*mater*, matter) supplied the raw material, while the father contributed the soul. The female, observed the philosopher, was a rounded and sloppy creature, close to the earth and to water, lacking in the capacity to create form out of matter. If all went well in the procreative act, the male would master the female and impose his form upon her matter. But, if his vitality were low, a plump and shapeless daughter would result instead of a formed and angular son.

Aristotle's views gained their most significant and lasting entrance into Christian thought through Thomas Aquinas. To the latter as to the former, males are endowed with natural superiority. Women are ordained to be passive, and men to play the active and forming role. In women sexual appetites predominate, while men are inherently more rational and stable. Aquinas borrowed directly from Aristotle's biology and from that philosopher's definition of women: the female is a "misbegotten" or "defective" male. Nature always intends to produce males, so a woman is a man gone wrong. Thus, Aquinas could say, "Man is the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature."⁵⁴ So embedded in Western thought was the notion of the man's superior biological function in reproduction, that four centuries after Aquinas early microscopists were picturing spermatozoa as containers with homunculi (miniature, fully-formed males) sealed up inside.

Turning to the Protestant side of our heritage, we have already noted the Reformers' continuing suspicion of sexuality as such. What remains to be observed is the manner in which that was linked with a pessimism and subordination in regard to women. Thus, Luther could say, "We can hardly speak of her without a feeling of shame, and we surely cannot make use of her without shame."⁵⁵ And Calvin declared, "Let man exercise authority with

moderation, let woman be satisfied with the state of subjection and not take it amiss that she is made inferior to the more distinguished sex."⁵⁶ If the Reformers were not always consistent in these expressions, such attitudes were, nevertheless, unmistakably present.

We have seen that the Reformers' attacks on the cult of meritorious virginity and their elevation of the spiritual status of marriage also meant that the innovating and formative influence of women in the Catholic monastic communities was removed as a Protestant possibility. At the same time, something else occurred in Reformation thought and practice which, though not deliberately calculated to subordinate women, had this effect. It was the distinctive Protestant shifts in the understanding of God, and the results of this in ecclesiastical practice.⁵⁷ Doctrinal teaching virtually abandoned any strong emphasis upon God's immanent presence (so characteristic of late medieval mysticism). Rather, divine justification of the human sinner meant that the Wholly Other God worked through extrinsic historical acts quite independent of human cooperation. It was the God "whose inscrutable judgments were symbolized by a renewed emphasis on the doctrine of predestination and a preference for the Word over sacrament as the chosen means of God's saving presence among us."⁵⁸ Further, the imagery and language about God much more heavily reflected the patriarchal patterns of the Old Testament, in contrast to the vocabulary of medieval experiential theology to which women had made significant contributions.

Parallel with these theological shifts came certain ecclesiastical practices which implicitly reinforced traditionally masculine over feminine values. The Protestant Reformers, understandably reacting against serious abuses in the church, embarked upon an iconoclasm in both practice and theory. There was an attack upon things physical in the church—relics, stained glass, crucifixes, images of the Virgin. As Eleanor L. McLaughlin observes, "The mood was one of distinction, analysis, criticism, rather than integration and rediscovery of wholeness."⁵⁹ Ulrich Zwingli's campaign against music in the church illustrates the point. Lest the true worship of God be marred by those emotions and fleshly feelings which music elicits, he declared, let the church organs be smashed and the sing-

ing of chorales forbidden. The Reformation mood was heavily and traditionally "masculine."

The Continuing Costs of Sexist Dualism

The price of our continuing experience of sexist dualism which must be paid by women is most immediate and most profound. Mary Daly's description makes the point.⁶⁰ One cost is the tendency toward psychological paralysis. Through their internalization of an identity which is other-than-the-norm, women frequently experience immense anxiety over social disapproval should they attempt to express a positive self-image and a new consciousness of self-worth. The mechanisms of social control in such instances quickly come into play: "ridicule, insults, instant psychoanalysis expressed in such comments as 'penis-envy,' 'man-hater,' or 'unfeminine.'"⁶¹

Related to this is the phenomenon of "feminine antifeminism." Many women have identified with the male power structure. Some find comfort and security in the traditional, submissive role. A few have risen to outstanding achievement in a "masculine" field and discourage the competition from other women who would follow them. Thus, some women view as threats those others who would challenge the male power structure.

False humility is a price which many women feel forced to pay. Based upon the internalization of traditional male opinion and norms, such false humility internally counsels the woman to fear success and never to rise too high in achievement. Guilt feelings are induced over any significant challenges to the male ego.

Emotional dependence is closely related, and its manifestations are both numerous and varied: the fear of going out in the evening without male accompaniment; rigidity in following rules and orders; seeking the advice of the man before making important decisions; the stifling of intellectual creativity.

Coupled with these profound psychic and emotional costs are pervasive social and institutional ones. Job discrimination, lower pay for commensurate work, discrimination in educational opportunities and ecclesiastical positions, economic penalties in credit and Social Security—these are but a sampling of a long list.

The "sexual revolution" in recent decades has begun the quest to overcome spiritualistic dualism. But, as we have already seen,

many of these trends only perpetuate the dualism in altered ways. Women presently encounter this in a unique manner. For centuries subject to a sexual double standard, many are now claiming a single standard of sexual morality for all persons. Yet, if women are urged to adopt typical male attitudes toward sexuality, if they are to learn a casual and physical orientation toward sexual expression, if they are encouraged to take up the quest for orgasmic experience divorced from the integrity of the person, then the mind-body alienation will continue. Rosemary Ruether thus concludes, "however much women are exhorted to learn the same casually physical view of sexual experience, the continued power relations between men and women assure that they will be more the victims in the process."⁶²

While women have been the chief victims of sexual dualism, the costs to men are heavy as well. One cost of male dominance is hyper-rationalism and its counter side, the truncated development of the affective life. Many men simply do not "feel" very well. The high value placed upon technical reason, classification, and systematization tends to make them neglect the senses and the emotions as instruments of perception. Further, this pattern frequently causes men to ignore realities which do not seem to fit into the current analytical scheme, as was dramatically illustrated by administration officials and others during the Vietnam War.⁶³

Fundamental to such narrowed rationalism is the male psychology of dominance and control. In the typically masculine value system talking is valued over listening, competition and conflict over incremental growth, self-confidence over humility, decisiveness over thoughtfulness, charisma and dynamism over long-term credibility, an aggressive approach over a persuasive one, and tangible rewards over the more internal satisfactions.⁶⁴ Dominance and control are evident in this constellation of values, and this combined with the fear of emotion makes interpersonal intimacy difficult for large numbers of men. Competition is injected into situations which do not call for it.⁶⁵

As an adjunct of this syndrome, violence becomes a manifestation of masculinity, with immense costs to both individual and group.⁶⁶ A certain code of masculinity is purchased at the price of suppressing tenderness and self-acceptance. Socialized toward a deep fear

of homosexuality and toward a self-respect based in considerable measure upon sexual potency and conquest, the young man is torn by both cultural demands and fears about his own sexual strength. The implications for social violence are unmistakable.

The masculine orientation to sex tends strongly toward genital-centeredness. There is an inordinate male concern about their genital size, a factor not unrelated to the "bigger is better" pattern of masculine cultural values. Largeness of body build generally seems evidence of masculinity and the ability to control. But this, in turn, nurtures self-conscious, mechanical perspectives about sex and leads to the diminution of capacities for self-giving, tenderness, ecstasy, and play.

Genitalization of male sexuality means loss of whole-body erotic sensitivity. Many men have been reared to think of their bodies as fortresses in need of defense. Anything that tries to penetrate the body's boundaries is dangerous. But this in turn delimits the capacity for psychic intimacy, for intimacy seems to involve the willingness, at least in some degree, to give up the rigid differentiation between one's own body and that of another.⁶⁷ The result is "psychic celibacy"—the tendency to keep women emotionally and mentally at arm's length, even when there is genital sex expression.⁶⁸

Genitalization also means the heightening of the dominant-aggressive images of sex expression in men. Germaine Greer notes that the common street words for the penis are "tool" names, and for intercourse they are "poking" words—images which are instrumental, technological, and controlling.⁶⁹ Obsession with genital prowess then perpetuates a double standard in sexual ethics. The sexually-experienced man who insists on the importance of his bride's virginity may well be prizing her sexual ignorance for his own security; she will be easier to lead and control, and she will not make comparisons. Further, her virginity assures him that he is the winner in one more competitive game.⁷⁰

The costs of male sexism to women should be painfully obvious. The costs to men are present, too, and the toll taken upon the social and institutional fabric is beginning to be recognized. Most fundamentally, however, sexist dualism is a No spoken to God. It violates the divinely-created equality of persons. It is a refusal of God's

invitation to the life of faith which by its nature calls for risk and trust, acceptance and dependence. Dualistic sexism as initiated and sustained by men betrays an anxious and self-defeating kind of works-righteousness. It is a secularized quest for justification, for proving one's worth and acceptableness as a man through achievement and performance.⁷¹

The Need for a Religious Answer to Sexual Alienation

In the face of both alienating dualisms, spiritualistic and sexist, the key question is, From whence is our salvation? Where, in the midst of death, is life? Where, in our illness, is healing to be found?

Philosophy can assist us. The crucial limitation, however, is that only rethinking the problem of dualistic alienation is insufficient.⁷² It assumes that the problem is "out there," and if a solution can be formulated the problem can be solved. The fact of the matter, however, is that *we* are the problem. The issue lives in us.

Nevertheless, philosophical insights can lead part of the way. While, unfortunately, philosophy to date has given precious little attention to sexist dualism, the discipline has been concerned about the spiritualistic variety. Thus, Marcel and Sartre are so convinced of the intimate union of mind and body that they find it only appropriate to say, "I *am* my body." Yet, there is a persisting paradox. Not only do I experience my body as me, but I also experience it as other than me. My body imposes limitations upon "me," and it has processes which continue of their own accord whether "I" will them or not. And, as Richard Zaner remarks, "Most of all, my body is the embodiment of that most foreign of all things—death. In some sense, I, too, die; my body takes me with it . . ." ⁷³

Thus, some philosophers in attempting to overcome the Cartesian dualism of mind versus body, can describe the problem with insightful helpfulness; we experience both identity of mind and body, and we also experience otherness, separateness. Beyond the articulation of the problem, however, there seems to be no solution on the rational level alone.

Psychoanalytic theory and practice appears a more hopeful answer. Regarding Hellenistic dualism, Freudian theory illuminates the various forms of projection utilized by the alienated self, and in therapeutic practice assists the individual to recognize repressed

urges and integrate them more constructively into the conscious self. Yet, Freudian theory itself is freighted with a biological naturalism about human sexuality which ultimately undercuts its social and personal dimensions (see Chapter 2).

Regarding patriarchal or sexist dualism, psychoanalytic theory also shows its limits. Freud himself believed that women were inherently defective because they lacked the male genital characteristics necessary for normative humanity. Thus, the woman's psychic development was fated to be a frustrated quest to receive from males the potency of which nature had deprived her. The major Freudian revisionists, however, were more helpful. Alfred Adler revised Freud, observing that "penis-envy" was not the reflection of an ontological deficiency in the woman but rather the envy of male power and social domination. Karen Horney went further in her reconstruction. Beneath the rationalizations of male misogyny she found male envy of and revenge against women who appeared more central to the procreative process than did men. Outside of the Freudian tradition, Carl Jung had a more positive view of women, and he constructively pointed toward the ideal of the androgynous personality—uniting in one individual the "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics. But if Jung refused to see woman as naturally deficient or as the embodiment of sensuality, he still fell prey to another cultural stereotype, the "spiritual feminine." Thus, for him masculinity remains ego and intelligence, while femininity is unconscious creativity and intuition, and the stereotypes are not finally overcome.⁷⁴

But, it can be argued, psychological theory is not inherently bound to dualistic sexual assumptions. And that is true. Further, some of its presently-available insights into the inner dynamics of both alienation and reconciliation are invaluable. We shall draw upon them time and again. Still, the psychotherapeutic process of healing at its best not only utilizes the creative human powers of restoration but also points beyond their limits and distortions to the ultimate human need: the grace of God. From a Christian perspective this divine love, continually enfolded in human experience, is ultimately and utterly necessary if the dualistic nemesis of our sexual alienation is to be overcome.

Love and Sexual Ethics

Sex as the Language of Love

CENTRAL TO THE image of God in which we are created is the will to communion.¹ We are social beings through and through. We are nurtured into our humanness in community, and we have some deep, often unarticulated, sense that loving communion is our intended and ultimate destiny. The positive ethical claim upon us, then, is that we are to become what we essentially are. We are to realize in our actions and in our human becoming that communion of love. The negative side of this—sin—is not fundamentally the breaking of moral codes or the disobeying of laws, though it may involve that. More basically, it is the failure to become what we are. It is the estrangement, the alienation, which inhibits fulfillment and destroys communion.

Our sexuality, as we have seen, is not one restricted or compartmentalized segment of our lives. It is at the center of our response to life. It is the way in which we are in the world as embodied selves, female or male, with certain affectional orientations, with qualities socially defined as "masculine" and "feminine." It is a basic way in which we express both our incompleteness and our

relatedness. It is God's ingenious way of calling us into communion with others through our need to reach out and touch and embrace—emotionally, intellectually, physically. Sexuality thus is never accidental or peripheral to our possibility of human becoming. It is basic and intrinsic to that possibility. It is both the physiological and psychological grounding of our capacity to love. And if we meet God most truly as the "beyond in our midst," as the One whose continuing incarnation is expressed through creaturely relationships, then our sexuality is a sacramental means for the love of God.

Communion depends on communication, and human communication depends significantly on language. Recall (Chapter 2) how languages are cultural products. They are socially developed and they constantly change. Human speech, as distinguished from animal communication, is aimed more at self-expression and meanings than simply physical survival. This is true of our sexuality in general and of specific sex acts in particular. As human beings we have sexual capacities and needs, as do animals. But our sexual acts are never simply acts of instinct, nor are they ever simply geared to species survival. Our organic drives and urges are never separable from the search for meaning and the quest for communion.²

To understand sex as a particular form of language yields some important ethical insights. For one thing, it presses us to try to understand every sexual act (and not just sex acts of a certain prescribed kind) as an expression of the human search for meaning and belonging. To say this does not give moral justification to any and every sexual act. It is, however, to say that even those we might judge deviant or unnatural or oppressive or cruel are still human attempts to find belonging and love.

Further, verbal languages are always contextual in their operation. The meaning of a word depends on its context in the sentence, the sentence in the paragraph. It is also true of sex as a language form. An older, simplistic ethical formula would have us judge the morality of a sexual act in essentially external and physical ways: the right organ in the right orifice with the right person. The more appropriate questions, however, ask about the nature and quality of personal communication which are intended in a sexual

act, the kind of communion which that act actually serves, and how all of this fits into the broader social fabric.

Sexual acts have special characteristics which make them emotionally powerful as a form of language. Such acts are heavily dependent on touch, and touch is an intimate receptor of communication, contrasted to distant receptors such as the eyes. We give and receive touch with the skin, and the skin delimits our physical bodies, so touch and identity seem particularly related. And adult sexual acts link us back to the earliest tactile pleasure and oral-anal-genital sensations of infancy and childhood. In so doing, they seem to gather up our personal histories in the present moment. All of this gives force to sex as language.³

More than simply language as such, sex for human beings is a language of love. We are humanly created in and for community, in and for communion, in and for love. In one sense, this is the ideal. In another sense—even in our estrangement and distortions—it remains descriptive of the actual situation, as I argued in Chapter 4. For however broken we might be, the image of God is never utterly destroyed. We never, even in our most “inhuman” moments, lose the need and the desire for love. Our sexual acts, in one way or another, will always express that fact.

Toward the Integration of Sex and Love

In spite of all that I have just said, the conscious connection between sex and love is essentially a modern discovery.⁴ All human ideas and understandings have their histories and hence are historically relative. This is clearly true of the conscious link between sex and love.

This perceived connection took centuries of human history to develop on any wide scale. The emergence of human “self-consciousness” is usually dated beginning around the thirteenth century in the West. By this is meant the gradual development of the empathetic ability—learning to experience the other's point of view, and hence to see oneself as the other sees one. Such self-consciousness is important for the development of “sexual love.”

In the practice of “courtly love” the late Middle Ages added something essentially new to sexual relations—the notion of romance. Of course, people had fallen in love before, but an under-

standing and conscious experience of romance was new. Courtly love was marked by three characteristics. That love was seen as ennobling and not sinful, that the beloved was seen as superior to the lover, and that the quest of love was always uncertain.

But this type of love was impossible in marriage—at least at that time. In marriage love was taken for granted and not freely given. In marriage the woman (the beloved) was inferior to the man. And marriage lacked exhilarating quest and furtive fulfillment. Thus, courtly love became a cult of adultery. Historian Roland Bainton contends, however, that after courtly love had emerged in Europe the path was broken open to find the unity of romantic love and sex in marriage.⁵ In France the pioneer was Christine of Pisa, a fourteenth century woman who rebelled against the denigration of members of her sex and in her writings articulated the delights of wedded love. About the same time in Italy Francesco Barbaro lauded the romance of married sex and vehemently decried the practice of family-arranged marriages which, in effect, denied the emotions of those about to be wed. In England, the sixteenth century poet Edmund Spenser wove romance and marriage together in his poetry (and, apparently, in his life), with the conviction that love is the key to all reality.

The point here is a double one. Courtly love opened up the possibility of love's integration with sex on a conscious level. By that same token it also opened up to consciousness the sexual experience as a vehicle of communication, so that people more than ever before came to experience the sex act as meaningful.

If the conscious possibility of integrating love's meaning with sexual expression arose in the centuries following the Middle Ages, it is likely that the modern period has added another dimension—psychosexual intimacy. Only in the modern period have we had literature that has typically exposed the author's inner feelings and self-consciousness. So also, in the modern period love began to be experienced as a unique form of self-consciousness. To tell the beloved how you felt meant to describe how you were aware of yourself in the beloved's presence. “In modern time, love becomes—for the first time in human history—the experience of psychological intimacy.”⁶

Some scholars identify Shakespeare with an important advance

in the connection of love with sex. While he undoubtedly shared with others of his time many ambiguities about sexuality, he also went beyond them. His writings portray a new sensitivity to the meaning of wholeness in sexual love.⁷

The Puritans and Quakers took things a step further. They came to believe that the *primary* purpose of marriage was communion, and, likewise, the *primary* purpose of sexual expression was communion. Procreation then became "a non-essential good." It was an added blessing, but marriage and sex were not dependent on procreation for their legitimation.

The notion of romantic marriage is part of a larger social revolution in the West which, beginning in the seventeenth century, also led to the development of the capitalistic economy and the democratic state. It was a basic reordering of the traditional ways in which persons were understood to relate to each other. Before that time, the more usual assumption had been that people must adapt to society. With that revolution, however, it became commonly believed that social institutions could and should be changed to meet human needs. That applied to marriage and the sexual relationship.

Herbert Richardson has summarized this broad historical development with the observation that there are four general ways in which the relation between sex and love can be perceived.⁸ One is to separate rather than unite them, by focusing each on different persons. Thus, in ancient Greece and modern Japan men quite typically have focused the orgasmic and procreative elements of sex in marriage, but have expressed the unitive quest for love and romance outside of marriage. Or, the two drives can be directed at the same person but remain essentially separate. Thus it appears that Victorian spouses expressed themselves sexually to each other and also loved each other, but did not genuinely link the two; sex was seen as a biological need, and "love" was higher. Or, sex can be renounced altogether in order that one might love more fully, as does the celibate monastic. But the fourth way is to envision the radical union of sex and love. That is now our possibility. Indeed, that is now part of our "nature," a human nature which is not simply biologically-given but also and significantly is historical and evolving.

To summarize: humanity's image of God is at once constant and changing. We are created for love and community—that is constant.

Our sociality cannot be escaped—it is the essence of our humanity. This inescapable mark stamps the whole sweep of history, in its abuses as well as in its fulfillment. On the other hand, as any one of us experiences the essence of our humanity we also experience change. Its possibility and its meaning can deepen in our realization, or it can be denied and distorted. But on a more corporate and historical level there is also change. In relatively recent history, to a degree unknown previously, we have become capable of sensing the connection between our created destiny for community and our sexuality. Because human consciousness is what it *now* is in our culture, even at those times when we refuse to affirm it we are *capable* of affirming this: sex is intended to be a language of love.

The Meanings of Love

Surely, love is not the only ethical norm for Christians. But I believe that it is our central norm, and inescapably so. It is the Bible's supreme way of articulating God's purposes for and actions toward humankind. It has been Christians' paramount description of their experience in meeting the divine presence in Jesus Christ.

Yet, the word itself is slippery and even dangerous. From the torturers of the Inquisition to paternalistic slave-owners to dominating husbands and fathers, in gross and subtle ways people over the centuries have dehumanized other people in the name of love and frequently with the sincerely-felt conviction that they were indeed acting in disinterested love.⁹ So also, "love" has been invoked to justify sexual expressions of all sorts: "if you love each other, it's all right." In one sense that claim is profoundly true—since love is the central meaning and purpose of our sexuality, it is also the measuring standard and justification for any particular sexual act. But everything hinges upon the content given to the word, so to that inquiry we must turn even though the question deserves a volume rather than a few pages.

Love is both the process and the reality of communion—it is that relationship of reunion with God, with the creaturely neighbor, with the self. Tillich puts it well: "[Love] is the moving power of life . . . which drives everything that is towards the unity of the separated. . . . The power of love is not something which is added to an otherwise finished process, but life has love in itself as one

of its constitutive elements. It is the fulfillment and the triumph of love that it is able to reunite the most radically separated beings, namely individual persons."¹⁰

It is commonplace and useful in Christian ethics to utilize the classic distinctions in speaking of love. *Epithymia* (or *libido*) is the desire for sexual fulfillment. *Eros* is aspiration and desire for the beloved. *Philia* is mutuality and friendship. And *agape* is freely offered self-giving. Useful as these distinctions are, they are misused when they are interpreted as signifying four different and separable loves. Rather, they appropriately point to different dimensions of the rich unity of love—dimensions which can be disjoined only at the expense of serious distortion.

Unfortunately, that distortion has plagued Christian thought, causing endless confusion about human sexuality. It has been most commonly expressed by posing a sharp contrast and opposition between *agape* and *eros*. A generation ago, Anders Nygren formulated the most influential contemporary statement of this sort.¹¹ God's love, he argued, is sheer *agape*, and hence this becomes the paradigm of that distinctively Christian love to which we are called. Such love is spontaneous and unmotivated by its object. It is the initiator of the relationship and indifferent to the value of its object. It is value-creating: "God does not love that which is already in itself worthy of love, but on the contrary, that which in itself has no worth acquires worth just by becoming the object of God's love."¹²

Nygren postulated a fundamental opposition between divine love and human love, especially human sexual passion. Human love is by nature possessive and egocentric. Christian love, however, transcends this because now divine love flows through the human receptacle, a love which has nothing to do with desire, longing, and sexual fulfillment.

Sadly enough, this divorce between *agape* and *eros* has been affirmed in one way or another by numerous contemporary Christian thinkers, even folk of widely differing theological outlooks. The results have been several. Human emotions, desires, and sexual feelings have remained unintegrated into Christian understandings of selfhood. The manner in which our sexuality underlies and informs all of our loving has been left unappreciated and unclarified.

The positive functions of both desire and self-love have been misunderstood and denigrated. And countless Christians have been deprived of constructive guidance and burdened with needless guilt.

Yet, the sharp contrast between *agape* and ordinary human love is not supported in the Greek Bible. There is no separate word there for sexual love. "Agape" is used to describe the divine love, the intimate friendship of David and Jonathan, and the sensuous love of the Song of Songs alike. Nor does it appear that "eros" and its cognates were deliberately avoided by the biblical writers simply because these words referred to sexual desire in pagan literature.¹³

In short, this persisting dichotomy between *agape* and *eros* in so much Christian interpretation cannot be justified or explained by careful biblical and historical scholarship. The more likely reason for its pervasiveness is simply the pervasiveness of our experience of the alienating sexual dualisms. The connection of the *agape-eros* disjunction with spiritualistic dualism is most obvious. Plato's split between spiritual love and vulgar (bodily) love, the Stoics' definition of virtue as freedom from all passions, Augustine's division between heavenly and earthly loves—all of these have left their mark.

But patriarchal dualism is just as much present and may even underlie the Hellenistic variety. Beverly Wildung Harrison contends that "sexism is the most basic paradigm, and most fundamental dynamic, for the inherited evaluative dualisms reflected in language at every level. . . . That is because biological dimorphism is surely the first, and most universally experienced. . . . I assume that physiological substrate must, in fact, enter in and inform our basic experience of duality so deeply and pervasively that we can hardly detect its impact."¹⁴ The problem is that we then move from our perceptions of life's dualities into supposed dualisms. We move from distinctions and differences to subordination and subjection. And (predominantly male) theologians and ethicists get involved with dualisms of concepts which they assume to be fundamental and irreconcilable: *eros* vs. *agape*, self-regard vs. self-sacrifice. These become seen not as polarities within a basic unity, but rather as irreconcilable ways of living and loving. Like the two

sexes, they are utterly different, and one must dominate the other.

But what if the definition of love reflects more of our gracious healing than the distortions of our alienation? As we move toward an androgynous mode of being human, we also move toward the possibility of celebrating polarity without dichotomy, toward affirming duality without dualism. For we sense in our own body-selves that oneness and unity is utterly basic. We sense that dichotomies cannot do justice either to God or to humanity, either to the divine love or to our own. Significantly, Reinhold Niebuhr (whose great contributions to Christian thought themselves were not unmarred by the agape-eros disjunction) wondered in one of his last writings before his death about the "mystery that the Christian faith is consistently embarrassed by all efforts to relate love to eros." He continued to recognize how easily the sexual impulse can become distorted, but he had begun to believe that it might also become sacramental and that sensual love might be "a seed pod of a more universal love."¹⁵

The different dimensions of love need each other for love's wholeness. Sexual desire, epithymia, for example, needs eros if sex is to have its intended meaning. Rollo May has said of our tendency to split the two, "We are in a flight from eros—and we use sex as the vehicle for the flight."¹⁶ And what is eros? "Eros is the drive toward union with what we belong to—union with our own possibilities, union with significant other persons in our world in relation to whom we discover our own self-fulfillment."¹⁷ Eros draws and attracts us. Unlike sexual desire divorced from eros, eros does not simply seek a reduction in tension nor is it just a quest for sensations. It expresses a constant desiring, a forever reaching out, a quest for communion with another, with beauty, with knowledge, with goodness. If sex without eros loses meaning and becomes a "need-pleasure," eros without epithymia loses its passion and power. Sexual desire without eros is primarily a fact about ourselves. United with eros it becomes a fact about the Beloved. As C. S. Lewis puts it, "It becomes almost a mode of perception, entirely a mode of expression."¹⁸

I believe, in addition to our humanly-directed expressions of epithymia and eros, we can justifiably speak—and we need to speak—of the erotic and sexual dimensions of our love for God. For, if

sex without eros loses meaning and direction, it is also true that eros without epithymia loses its passion and power. And a love for God devoid of passion and power does little to gladden either the human or the divine heart. (We shall return to this in the last chapter.)

Sexual desire and eros also need philia—mutuality and friendship. For example, a marriage without libido and romantic attraction is less than full, at best, and most likely has become a marriage of convenience. But sexual and romantic attraction without genuine friendship is also an invitation to disappointment and distortion. Without the equality of friendship, without shared interests and concerns beyond their own relationship, without the deep sense of their cohumanity, a marriage will most likely stagnate and very probably succumb to the sexist patterns of domination and submission.

Further, in the relation of friends apart from marriage it is a mistake to see the bond between them as philia alone, uninformed and unaffected by sexual dynamics and erotic desire. To be sure, there may be no desire for genital expression at all. But the lack of "sex" does not mean the absence of sexuality and its power. These are still two body-selves who rejoice in each other's physical presence, and the closer the friendship the more likely physical touch will be important to "being in touch." Nor is eros absent in deep friendship. If such virtues as benevolence, good will, caring, and courtesy can (and should) be unrestricted, by its very nature friendship is selective. In a rich friendship, eros is always present—as one is drawn to the other as a particular, desirable, yearned-for companion.

Agape is not another kind of love. Nor is it, as Tillich rightly notes, a dimension strictly comparable to the other three dimensions of our loving. It is the transformative quality essential to any true expression of any of love's modes. If we define Christian love as agape or self-giving alone—without elements of desire, attraction, self-fulfillment, receiving—we are describing a love which is both impoverished and impoverishing. But the other elements of love without agape are ultimately self-destructive. Agape present with sexual desire, erotic aspiration, and mutuality releases these from self-centeredness and possessiveness into a relationship

that is humanly enriching and creative. It does not annihilate or replace the other modes of our loving. It undergirds and transforms. And faith knows that agape is gift, and not of our own making.

Another Look at Self-Love

Closely linked with the question of love's dimensions is the recurring question of the place of self-love in the Christian life—and, in particular, in the Christian's life as a sexual being. In the previous chapter I have suggested that self-acceptance is an important mark of sexual sanctification. It is possible because of God's accepting grace. And it is necessary if we are to have the capacity for intimacy, if our bodies are to be fully personalized, and if we are to be genuinely open to other body-selves and to the material universe. The accent in that previous discussion was upon the psychodynamics of self-acceptance as an expression of grace. Now we return to the question—essentially the same issue—but now with a slightly different accent as we look at self-love in the context of sexual love, and in the larger Christian vision of love itself.

Gene Outka has argued that there are four typical ways in which the relation of agape and self-love is seen in Christian ethics.¹⁹ First, some give self-love a totally negative evaluation. It is incompatible with the Christian life. It is "wholly nefarious." Self-love is acquisitive, individualistic, concerned with one's private satisfactions, and prone to use others as tools for one's own desires. (Nygren's position on eros relentlessly leads him to this conclusion.)

A second possibility is that self-love is "normal, reasonable, prudent; it is not especially praiseworthy but not necessarily blameworthy."²⁰ We do not need to be urged toward concern about our own welfare. That comes naturally, and it becomes a problem only when there is a clash of legitimate interests with the neighbor. But, on the positive side, self-love does serve as a paradigm or index of love for the neighbor. We naturally seek our own good quite apart from our worth, and that is also our index for loving others.

Self-love, in the third view, is "justified derivatively." Agape, self-giving love of the other, is basic to Christian faith. But some kind of concern for the self is justified if and when it legitimately

stems from concern for others. For example, if I don't take care of myself physically, I likely will become a burden to others; thus, basically out of concern for *them* I will care for myself.

The fourth possibility sees self-love and other-love as all of one piece. They are indivisible. Neither is a means to the end of the other. I can love the other only when I love myself, and myself only when I love the other. Both loves are a moral obligation for Christians. Indeed, they are not "loves" so much as facets of one love.

Outka's interpretation has little to say about sexuality; in fact, this basic dimension of selfhood and loving is virtually ignored in an otherwise fine book. But, committed to the two-directional street of sexual theology, I believe it important to see how our experience as sexual beings sheds light upon this ethical issue (as well, of course, as how an ethics of the gospel gives shape to our sexual lives). Already my conviction that the fourth position is most adequate is obvious, but a further exploration of a few of its sexual facets may be useful.

The basic truth is that love is indivisible and non-quantifiable. It is not true that the more we save for ourselves the less we have for others. These are not alternatives, but rather an interdependent unity. Authentic self-love is not a matter of being curved inward upon the self. It is not narcissism, nor is it a grasping selfishness. It is self-acceptance and affirmation of one's own graciously-given worth and creaturely fineness (in spite of all distortions and flaws). As we have seen, the basic indivisibility of love is strikingly evident in our sexuality. Those who have rejected their bodies, who have denied the goodness of their sexuality, encounter immense difficulty in sexual responsiveness to another. "If we cannot say yes to ourselves we cannot offer ourselves unselfishly to anyone else; we can surrender to them, but we will have lost the gift that we were asked to bring."²¹

Self-love is basic to personal fulfillment. We are attracted to persons who radiate a sense of fulfillment. They seem to give out a certain unreflective and vital energy, and that vitality also appears to have a sexual base. Perhaps it is a combination of epithymia and eros. It is pervasive and contributes to the "timbre" of all love relationships.²² It is a quality of openness to the giving and

receiving of pleasure. One psychiatrist comments, "In general, we are repelled by an attitude of self-denial and drawn to people who enjoy living. I have heard many patients say, 'I wish my mother had given herself more pleasure.'" ²³

The psychiatrist is right about the unattractiveness of certain forms of self-denial. There is a type of masochism which undermines love and erodes intimacy. But there is another kind of selflessness which is possible only through a certain level of self-awareness. It is the selflessness which emerges from the person who has discovered his or her own identity in a fulfilling way. Dorothee Sölle characterizes it this way: "It is not a masochistic lust for punishment, but a partial renunciation freely given for the sake of another's fulfillment. . . . The stronger a person's self-identity . . . the easier partial renunciation becomes. . . . And so one could formulate the thesis: The greater one's realization of selfhood the greater . . . [the] ability for true renunciation. The more successful one is at living the easier it is . . . to let go of life." ²⁴

True sexual intimacy depends on the solid sense of identity of each of the partners. The entanglements in which identity is confused and diminished do not necessarily reflect the loss of love, but they do reflect the loss of love's dialectic. They become symbiotic relationships in which one person is reduced to being an extension of the other, and such relationships easily lead to resentment and rupture. Perhaps that is inevitable in the long run, for true intimacy is always communion—and not union without separation. ²⁵

Sexual intimacy is the communion of love, not unification. But such intimacy rests in some large measure upon each partner's own sense of worth as a person, each one's ability to be self-affirming. Without this, we elevate the other into the center of our lives, hoping that the other's affirmation will assure us of our own reality. But this is too large an order for the partner. The beloved has been idolatrized and confused with the divine. As David Harned fittingly comments, this confusion "is the source of the daimons that roam our world and whose shadows obstruct our vision. They are born whenever we turn to anything in the world and say, 'All I want is you.' When we mean what we say, we end up with neither you nor I." ²⁶

In point of fact, intimacy is always threatening to the person

who lacks self-affirmation. Without it, we tend to understand ourselves in terms of social roles. Without self-love we see ourselves only as we are mirrored in others' expectations for us. And in the sexual relationship, the playing of such roles is disintegrating, for it means that instead of being the unique and beloved partner one is rather a male or a female, a husband or a wife, in bed. ²⁷

The literary artists best capture this quality of intimacy without absorption, of communion which rests upon each one's self-affirming identity. Rainer Marie Rilke puts it this way: "Once the realization is accepted that, even between the closest human beings, infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole and against a wide sky." ²⁸

And, in the poetry of the French writer Anne Philipe: "I swim by your side in the warm, clear water, I wait for you to appear in the doorway under the wisteria. You say 'Good morning' to me, and I know your dreams, your first thoughts on the fringes of sleep—and yet you are a mystery. We talk: your voice, your thoughts, and the words you use to express them are the most familiar in the world to me. Each of us can end a sentence begun by the other. And you are—and we are—a mystery." ²⁹

Communion's dialectic of self-love and other-love thus depends in no small measure upon the self's growth toward androgyny. When we can affirm both types of needs within us, which Carl Jung called *animus* and *anima*—the self-asserting and the other-embracing, the initiating and the receptive—then we can embrace intimacy and respect mystery.

The Characteristics of Love

Love, then, involves commitment to the other, the willingness to risk and entrust oneself to the other. It is the desire to give and to open the self in personal nakedness to the beloved. Along with this *agapeic* quality, there is also the erotic desire to receive whatever the other will give to the self. Love is expectant. It recognizes the inexhaustible possibilities in the beloved, expecting that enriching novelty and surprise will emerge from the relationship. Love is the respect of individual identity. As such it is communion,

the intimate relationship of life with life which can become a sacramental channel to communion with God.³⁰

Another way of looking at sexual love is to observe the values which emerge from it.³¹ Such love is self-liberating; it expresses one's own authentic selfhood and thus releases further potential for growth. It is other-enriching; it has a genuine concern for the well-being of the partner. Sexual love is honest; it expresses as truthfully and as candidly as possible the meaning of the relationship which actually exists between the partners. It is faithful; such love expresses the uniqueness of the relationship, yet without crippling possessiveness. Sexual love is socially responsible, nurturing the fabric of the larger community to which the lovers belong. It is life-serving. Always this means the transmission of the power of newness of life from one lover to the other; sometimes it also means the procreation of children. Sexual love is joyous; it is exuberant in its appreciation of love's mystery and life's gift.

These are important characteristics and qualities of love which serve as ethical criteria of specific sexual acts. Beyond them all, Christian faith affirms that such love is essentially gift. Because we are loved into being, we are able to love—and in so doing, however imperfectly, continue the incarnation, the enfleshment of Word and meaning.

Components of Our Decisions About Sex-Related Issues³²

When we come to concrete decisions, however, we discover that it is not simply a matter of having a perceptive vision of love and then having the appropriate decisions automatically appear. A variety of additional factors impinge upon us. Awareness of them can augment our own ethical self-knowledge and can also illuminate why sincere Christians often differ from each other in sex-related judgments. Consider these several factors:

First, ourselves as the decision-makers. We bring our unique personalities into decisional situations. We bring our family backgrounds, our formative sexual experiences, our sex education, the influences of peer groups, church and culture. We bring our self-images as women and men, our affectional orientations, our psychic and relational needs. We bring whatever is our consciousness of God

in the midst of our relationships with others. In short, we bring ourselves—character, conscience, personal identity—and “who I am” at a given moment will profoundly affect what I do.

Second, our basic religious beliefs. Intimately linked with our identities is what we most deeply believe and in what or in whom we most deeply trust. Even though our consciously-confessed Christian beliefs may not consistently reflect our actual, operating faith, in our moments of greater integrity we strive to bring them together. Even so, it is obvious that among Christians there are seemingly endless varieties of faith definitions. Two examples, both concerning God and human nature, suggest how differing basic beliefs can press sexual decisions into different directions:

One might believe that God has established eternally-valid, binding rules governing appropriate sexual acts. On the other hand, one might believe that while God's nature is always that of unchanging love, God is intimately involved in the changing processes of history. And this means that the divine will for sexually-loving acts may vary with time and circumstances.

As a second example, one might believe that the image of God in which we are created is clearly heterosexual; hence, any homosexual expression violates our God-given human nature. Or, one might believe that the image of God essentially is a divinely-given capacity for loving communion; hence, the matter of sexual orientation is not fundamentally relevant to the fulfillment of our intended human nature. These examples of varying shapes of basic beliefs could be multiplied, but the point, I am sure, is obvious: what we believe about the realities of God and of human relationships will give significant shape to our sexual decisions.

Third, our styles of decision-making. There is no one correct style for Christian decision-making. Rather, there are several typical methods (and combinations thereof) by which persons go about deciding.³³ Three major ones are these:

The life of obedience: God is experienced principally as ruler, governor, and judge of our lives—the One to whom we are called to be faithfully obedient. In this pattern, sexual acts usually are

envisioned as right or wrong, depending upon whether they reflect fidelity to the commands of the faithful God.

The life of aspiration: Here the moral decision takes shape as it fits into a larger pattern of aspiration or movement toward life's great goal. God is experienced primarily as the One who sets before us the goal and empowers us to move toward it. The ultimate goal may be seen differently by different Christians, e.g. the kingdom of God, liberation from bondage, the realization of authentic humanity, Christian perfection. However the great goal of Christian life is visualized, specific sexual acts are judged good or bad, constructive or harmful, insofar as they contribute toward or detract from that final end toward which we are beckoned and destined.

The life of response: In this third typical pattern, the moral life is perceived as a dynamic interrelationship between persons and God. We are called to respond to the presence and activity of God in the midst of varied and changing contexts. We are called to a life of responsible initiative and creative action in the newness of each situation and in its continuity with the past. Sexual acts are evaluated in terms of their fittingness to what God is doing and intending in the midst of human relationships.

We might not be consistent in the method by which we make moral decisions. It is unlikely that anyone falls exclusively into one of the above types. Nevertheless, the pattern by which we typically decide sexual moral issues will suggest the amount of emphasis which we give to each of the several elements that comprise a decision:

- the *motive*: why should I (or shouldn't I) do this?
- the *intention*: at what am I aiming in and through this act?
- the *nature of the act itself*: how will I implement my aims? are certain acts intrinsically right or wrong, or are acts dependent upon circumstances?
- the *consequences*: in what way will I be accountable for the effects and results of this act or relationship?

Equally sincere Christians, then, might arrive at different sexual decisions not only because they are uniquely different moral agents and have differing interpretations of basic Christian beliefs, but also because their decisional methodology differs in style and emphasis.

Fourth, "the facts" and how we interpret them. Sexual decisions are made in the midst of a welter of data—about our own personal relationships, bits of medical and psychological information, perceptions of what others are doing sexually, and so on. Several things must be said about these data:

Facts are never pure. They are always filtered through our interpretive screens—colored by our personal needs and experiences, our background information, our reality convictions. There is, for instance, a general impression that male homosexuals have a greater tendency toward child molestation than do male heterosexuals. Current research, however, indicates that precisely the opposite is true. Conscious assimilation of this new information might well alter the shape of certain heterosexual attitudes about gay men. But whether or not this datum will be taken seriously and just how it might affect one's moral stance will vary considerably from person to person.

We ought, however, to let our most conscientious grasp of relevant facts affect the decisional process. Ours is an incarnational faith which confesses that God enters into the tangled webs of human circumstances: concreteness is important. Another example: some Christians believe that sexual intercourse outside marriage is always wrong, and within a marriage it is always moral. A moral generalization such as this can indeed point in the direction of a significant Christian sexual value. Yet, taken as it stands, such a sweeping judgment can be made only with considerable disregard of demonstrable facts. Rape *does* occur between married partners; often the weapons are psychic ones, but wife-battering cases grimly attest to physical force as well. And, outside of formal marriage, loving and humanly enriching sexual intercourse does seem to occur in *some* particular circumstances. Such evidence by itself does not determine morality, but it must be taken seriously.

Thus, facts and values are different. As important as concrete

is not always at its best, and hence participates in both doctrine and practice in dehumanizing forms of sexual oppression and exploitation, the perpetuation of stereotypes and judgmental exclusion, as do other human communities.

It is true in a broad but real sense that all human communities are moral communities. That is, to the extent that a collection of individuals is a group, there must be some sort of moral glue holding them together—shared purposes, norms, values. And it is correspondingly true that all human communities are faith communities, held together by some sort of shared trust and more-or-less common perceptions of what is real and worthwhile. But beyond the other groups to which we belong, the church has unique functions which make it vital to the Christian's moral processes. Central to its purpose as a group, the church *consciously* attempts to articulate, proclaim, reflect about, and liturgically celebrate the presence of God. And this is the One who challenges and renews us, forgives and empowers, judges our moral myopia and expands our sensitivities. Here is the One who loves us into being, and who presses us to embody love as the meaning of life—and of our sexuality.

Some Principles for Sexual Morality

Thus far I have tried to raise what I believe are important considerations about the meanings of love and about the elements of decision-making. To bring these things all together is much more of a *lived* ethical venture than simply an intellectual one.

Still, it is important to press things further than they now stand in this chapter. My attempts to wrestle with particular sexual situations will come in the next four chapters. But before turning to these particular and diverse contexts for sexual decision, I shall propose three broad principles which I believe to be appropriate Christian norms for sexual expression. By themselves principles are never sufficient, of course. Yet, together with everything else the person brings to moments of decision, principles can be useful and even, I believe, necessary.

First, love requires a single standard and not a double standard for sexual morality. All of love's elements which we have considered imply that love must always be expressed as justice. Without justice, it becomes individualistic and shallowly sentimental. And without

love, justice becomes simply a struggle for power.³⁴ Love expressed as justice becomes the lively concern for the empowerment of all persons, so that everyone has rightful access to the means for human fulfillment. This implies that there cannot be one sexual ethic for males and another for females, nor one for the unmarried and another for the married, nor one for those heterosexually oriented and another for those oriented to their same sex, nor one for the young and another for the old, nor one for the able-bodied and another for those with physical or mental infirmity. The same basic considerations of love ought to apply to all.

Second, the physical expression of one's sexuality with another person ought to be appropriate to the level of loving commitment present in that relationship. Our relationships exist on a continuum—from the fleeting and casual to the lasting and intense, from the relatively impersonal to the deeply personal. So also, physical expressions exist on a continuum—from varied types of eye contact and casual touch, to varied forms of embrace and kiss, to bodily caresses, to petting and foreplay, to the different forms of sexual intercourse. In some way or another, we inevitably express our sexuality in every human relationship. The morality of that expression, especially of the degree and type of its physical intimacy, will depend upon its appropriateness to the shared level of commitment and the nature of the relationship itself.

Third, genital sexual expression should be evaluated in regard to motivations, intentions, the nature of the act itself, and the consequences of the act, each of these informed and shaped by love. Let us look at these elements separately:

Motive (why should I do, or not do, this?). Each genital act should be motivated by love. Obviously, this means love for one's partner. It also means love of oneself, and celebration in love for God of this gift of communion with the other and oneself. This does not mean that sexual desire and pleasure are inappropriate or unworthy motivations. It simply means that when such is abstracted from one's care for personal wholeness, genital sex can be more fragmenting than healing and liberating.

Intention (at what am I aiming in this act?). Following from the above, each genital act should aim at human fulfillment and wholeness, God's loving intention for all persons. The intent should be

the engagement of the whole person—body, mind, and feelings. Sexual fulfillment requires sexual pleasure, and good genital sex is highly erotic, warm, intimate, playful—immensely pleasurable. It can also be almost mystical in its evocation of self-transcendence and its possibilities for communication and communion.

The concern for fulfillment-in-communion involves such intentions as sustaining, healing, and growth through our genital expression.³⁵ The intention to *sustain* the partner involves emotional security and sensitive, empathetic communication; and these imply continuity in the relationship. The concern for *healing* involves the intention that this sexual relationship be of the sort which can significantly transform the wounds of our lives, contributing greater health to the whole person. *Growth* means the realization of our potential; it means increasing access to our physical, emotional, and intellectual resources—availability to ourselves and hence to others. Good genital sex intends growth toward greater wholeness.

The act (are certain sexual acts inherently right and good, and certain others intrinsically wrong and bad?). I find it extremely difficult to label whole classes of acts as inherently right or wrong, since moral quality hinges so heavily on what is being communicated to the persons involved in the particular relationship and context. Yet, we can surely say that acts which by their nature are loveless—coercive, debasing to the other's sensitivities, utterly impersonal, obsessed solely by physical gratification—such acts of whatever sexual sort are excluded.

Consequences (what most likely will result from this genital act, and in what ways am I willingly accountable?). The willingness to assume responsibility for the results of a sexual act is also one of love's marks. It involves responsibility to the ongoing relationship and its particular commitments and promises. It involves responsiveness to the partner's continuing needs for sustaining, healing, growth—and to one's own needs for the same. If a child is conceived and born, it means responsibility for loving nurture. Accountability also means the weighing of the act in terms of its probable effects for the wider community, for sexual acts however private are never privatistic. We are social beings. Every action has wider implications, and we are called to social responsibility.

Thus, will this sexual expression enhance or diminish the love and justice by which a human community must exist?

A Concluding Word

The above principles remain on a general level, as principles must. My intent has been to word them in a way that makes them inclusive in application to the variety of sexual situations and acts of which human beings are capable. Some readers will want to lay claim to more specific sexual rules in addition to guiding principles such as these. If so, well and good. I personally find certain sexual rules important and useful. I do not view them as exceptionless absolutes, but I presume strongly in their favor, and the burden of proof is then on me to justify any exception by its greater faithfulness to the higher loyalty. Rules can protect us at the boundaries of our experience where we encounter our limitations in knowledge and wholeness. But however sexual rules are used, they should nurture our growth into greater maturity and responsible freedom, and not inhibit it.

To love is to be open to life. Nowhere is this more evident than in the directly-sexual forms of our loving. In contemporary Roman Catholic declarations on sexuality (particularly in *Humanae Vitae* and in the declaration of Vatican II) the phrase "openness to life" is used as an essential mark of each morally legitimate sexual act.³⁶ Yet those documents give to that phrase a narrow biological exposition. In them it means that there can be no deliberate frustration of sex's procreative potential through artificial contraception or through non-procreative acts such as masturbation and same-sex intercourse. That biological interpretation is far too narrow. But the phrase itself is a splendid one. Indeed, sexual acts which can be deemed good, right, and fitting will always be those which embody and promote "openness to life." And the definition of "life" for us is centered in that human wholeness embodied in the One who came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

Sexual Salvation: Grace and the Resurrection of the Body

SIN IS ESTRANGEMENT; grace is reconciliation."¹ Salvation, in its original meaning, is healing. It is the reuniting of what has been torn apart and estranged. It is the recovery of a center and a wholeness in that which has been split asunder. It is the overcoming of alienation within the body-self, between the person and the world, between the person and God. Salvation is sexual. This does *not* mean that we are saved by our sexuality. We are saved by the grace of God—God's unearned, healing, life-giving love. But "sexual salvation" *does* mean that we are given new life not in spite of the fact that we are sexual body-selves but precisely in and through this entire selfhood which we are.

The focus for this chapter is not on salvation generally, the incredibly broad and rich dimensions of divine grace and human healing. Rather, the focus is more particularly on the healing and augmented wholeness we experience both in and through our sexuality, those dimensions of us which have been wounded and divided by spiritualistic and sexist dualisms. Our concern is the process and meaning of the resurrection of the sexual body.

Three attitudes toward sexuality have appeared most commonly in Christian thought.² The Medievalists typify one of them: control by reason and will. After all, is it not our experience that we can more easily master other appetites than we can master the sexual? We can come to terms with our greed. We can repress or sublimate our aggression. But our sexual desires seem to leap up at inconvenient moments, revealing to us our animal state, taking possession of us with forces we do not understand. Instead of being our own master, at times we seem to become our own monster. Thus, we seek to control our sexuality for higher purposes through reason and will power.³

But self-control easily slips into bodily mortification—the death of the flesh. In reaction to this, a second attitude emerges. Over against the stringency of "the Apollonian," some would have us exalt "the Dionysian" within us. This may be the oldest attitude of all, though it is forever being rediscovered. Sexuality, it is said, has been artificially repressed. We must throw off the social masks, reclaim our inner forces and feelings, and in this way be united with a cosmic vitality. While there are many secular advocates of the Dionysian, there are articulate Christians as well. But, curiously, the members of this school do not seem to regard sexual expression and sexual love as truly personal.⁴

Then there is a third attitude: sex is unimportant. It is simply there. This is the approach of detachment in some form or another. Sexuality is neither divine nor demonic. Jesus demythologized sex, and we can have freedom over our sexuality, too, only if we can "take it or leave it." Indeed, we must be able to laugh at sex or we shall be humiliated by it, for it is an irrational, impersonal force which threatens to turn even the best of us into caricatures of ourselves.⁴ Odd and laughable, sexuality becomes almost inconsequential.

If there are hints of truth in each of these orientations, there also is something basically amiss. A common thread unites persons of each of these apparently widely-differing views. Dan Sullivan says it well: it is "the unyielding determination to locate sex somewhere—or anywhere—outside the human self, the authentic 'me,' that inner core of personhood which makes humanity distinctive." In this one crucial respect there is no difference between the Christian Fathers'

conviction that sex is a 'beast in the belly,' and Norman Brown's that it is 'Christ in me.'"⁵ And, if sexuality is still experienced as being outside of and apart from the authentic self, there is still alienation.

To Christian faith, however, alienation is never the last word. The Apostle speaks with power of both alienation and reconciliation. Of the former, he exclaims, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24.) It is not inconsistent with the Gospel to alter Paul's words at this point: "Wretched person that I am! Who will deliver me from this *death of the body*?" Then, with him we can continue, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Because fear is at the root of our alienation, merely an intellectual understanding of the problem will not release us. But the Gospel does not announce salvation through correct understanding. Rather, it comes through the gracious love of God received in human openness and trust.

It is quite possible that the term "salvation" may not be particularly helpful to many contemporary Christians. In spite of its widespread traditional use in the church (and perhaps because of it), the term is fraught with numerous associations which may mislead rather than assist. We need then to be flexible and pluralistic in vocabulary, as, indeed, the Bible is. Different nuances will attach themselves to different words, and that is all to the good. A variety of polar concepts thus can be used, bearing common meanings with different shadings: sin and salvation, alienation and reconciliation, fragmentation and wholeness, death and life, law and gospel, death and resurrection.

The experience of the new life is a relational reality in which the miraculous and the everyday stuff of life are interwoven. The incarnation of God, the divine presence in and through human flesh, is always a miracle. We celebrate its decisive and normative occurrence in Jesus Christ. We also celebrate faith's conviction that God's incarnation continues to occur. The resurrecting power is beyond our own. It is the mysterious creativity and renewal of life itself, God's power in our midst. And the miracle of the body's resurrection is all the more awesome because it occurs through human gestures, human words, human touch and caress, human intimacy.

We experience new life of the body-self as a gift. A dead body

cannot raise itself, nor can we lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. It is the eternal paradox of life and of the gospel that our own strenuous and strident efforts to possess renewal seem to shut us off from it more completely. This is inevitable, for the self who so strives to be changed is the very self who is organized by means of a dualism, which itself must be challenged and overthrown, not simply confirmed by effort. The latter is the trap of both sexual ascetics and libertines who, in trying to overcome the alienation of their bodies, only seem to establish it more firmly since their weapon is the dualism which has nurtured the alienation in the first place.⁶

The miraculous dimension in sexual salvation lies not in the fact that it is necessarily dramatic, which it may not be, nor that it interferes with the "natural world" (if by that we mean an external structure working according to its own laws). It is in our discovery of what we really are. As H. A. Williams declares, "The discovery is miraculous because the previous organization of our being provided no vantage point from which we could have seen what now we do see. Our new vision has come to us. It has arrived from we know not where."⁷ To be sure, there is a paradox here. Significant change in the body-self does not usually occur without effort, risk-taking, courage, and pain. So Paul counsels, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." But the point is that the effort, risk, and will are expended within the context of a creative Power for change which is neither our invention nor possession: "for God is at work in you . . ." (Philippians 2:12-13).

The experience of reconciliation of the body-self surely is not the exclusive possession of any sect or creed, Christian or otherwise. In point of fact, because both sexist and spiritualistic dualisms have so plagued Christianity, many people have left the church to seek the wholeness of their sexual humanity elsewhere. And, for our own understanding we must draw on the experiences and insights of numerous non-Christians who have realized something genuine of that sexual salvation to which we point with Christian symbols. But those of us who find ourselves within the church, both by fate and by free choice, will use also those faith symbols which for us best express that universal and gracious Reality which the words themselves cannot possess but in which they meaningfully participate.

Within the experience of sexual salvation there seems to be a double movement. It is not simply a temporal sequence, though there are elements of that. Yet, Christian experience throughout the centuries has found articulation in two distinguishable and complementary dimensions of reconciliation. Again, these have been given different names bearing different nuances: justification and sanctification, God's power over us and God's power within us, gift and response, acceptance and growth, forgiveness and fulfillment. We can begin with the reality to which the first term in each pair points.

Grace and the Sexuality of Jesus

That we experience God's gracious justification or acceptance in and through Jesus Christ has profound sexual implications. "The Word became flesh." Jesus was a sexual being. And here is God's affirmation of our own sexuality.

Nevertheless, the most common Christological heresy is still the locutio heresy, spiritualistic dualism applied to Jesus. It is the conviction held in varying forms by countless Christians past and present that Jesus Christ could not have been fully human, that God (acting in proper taste) would not have expressed the divine Spirit through human flesh, and that in Jesus we see true God but only in the *appearance* of a human body. Unfortunately, the record is clear: for the most part the church has presented Jesus as sexless. Because the human body is vitally and spontaneously sexual, many Christians in their dualistic alienation have been offended by the radical implications of the incarnation. And, to deny Jesus sexual-
ity in one way or another "for most people today is about the most effective way of saying that he was not fully human."⁸ The Victorian within still winces at the thought that the incarnation might be "a tale of the flesh."

And Yet, the gospel has always had elements of scandal about it, and it has never shied away from offending the tastes of the respectably righteous. On this particular issue, however, theologians have been slow. Until recently it was more often the writers and artists who wrestled openly with the question of Jesus' sexuality—D. H. Lawrence, Nikos Kazantzakis, the rock opera *Jesus Christ Super-*

star, and the like. If their conclusions were not altogether persuasive, at least they sensed, with an urgency greater than that of most orthodox Christians, that what is at stake in this question (as in every Christological issue) is the possibility, meaning, and nature of human salvation.

In recent years, however, several theologians have voiced their positive beliefs on the matter. A considerable part of the concern is the realization that sexuality appears to be intrinsically and not accidentally related to one's capacity to love. Thus, John Erskine writes of Jesus, "His character renders it for me utterly impossible that his youth and manhood could have been unmoved by warm, human emotions. . . . If he really took our nature upon him and was human, then he had our equipment of sex."⁹ Similarly, Tom F. Driver observes, "The absence of all comment [in the Gospels] about Jesus' sexuality cannot be taken to imply that he had no sexual feelings. . . . I cannot imagine a *human* tenderness, which the Gospels show to be characteristic of Jesus, that is not fed in some degree by the springs of passion. The human alternative to sexual tenderness is not asexual tenderness but sexual fear."¹⁰ Likewise, psychiatrist-theologian Jack Dominian reflects upon the necessary connection in Jesus between self-acceptance and genuine openness to others: "This response was unhampered by any need to reject, deny, or condemn any part of himself, hence of others. . . . Although the evidence is extremely limited, it is hard to see how such total self-acceptance and availability could have been present without including full awareness of his sexuality."¹¹

William Phipps has been the most vigorous in pursuing the question. He argues that while Jesus' celibacy is a possible interpretation, his marriage is much more probable. The evidences, he believes, are multiple. The Gospels do not record Jesus as having stated either that he was born of a virgin or that he himself was a virgin. Nor does the book of Acts indicate that those closest to him knew of any special virginal conditions about him. In addition, while Jesus was sharply critical of certain aspects of Judaism, he was thoroughly Jewish in most respects, and that faith-culture rejected celibacy both in theory and in practice. Since we have no information about Jesus' life between his ages of twelve and thirty

(the customary time for Jewish betrothal and marriage), it is likely that he followed prevailing Jewish custom and married as a young man. Indeed, his delight in women and his understanding of them seems to contrast markedly with the style of an ascetic, as is apparent when one compares Jesus' manner and personality with that of the Essene ascetic John the Baptist. Phipps concludes that the notion of a celibate savior is not the product of the apostolic age but rather grew out of Christianity's later contact with Hellenistic dualism.¹²

The conclusion remains, I believe, highly debatable. It is possible, to be sure, but the arguments from silence are not convincing enough to make it probable. In any event, Jesus' marriage is not the crux of the issue. His sexuality is, and the virtue of at least pressing the possibility of marriage is to help us take his *fully* human nature with greater seriousness. Even if his celibacy remains probable, the possibility of genital expression and, most likely, the temptation toward it need affirmation. If we are offended at the thought that Jesus was ever inclined toward a fully sexual union, such offense might simply betray the suspicion that sex is unworthy of the Savior because it is unworthy of us. But we need not project our own alienation upon him. If he at times was so inclined, we can well assume that he did not think of it as a temptation toward something intrinsically tainted and suspect, but rather as a temptation to turn aside from a growing conviction of his compelling vocation toward a unique role in God's kingdom.¹³

John A. T. Robinson quite appropriately links the issue of Jesus' sexuality with the question of the manner of his birth.¹⁴ A non-physical interpretation of the Virgin Birth story still leaves unresolved the manner of Jesus' conception, and Robinson, together with several other biblical scholars, raises the possibility of an irregular sexual union. This question, like that of Jesus' marriage, remains debatable, but this line of inquiry should not be rejected out of hand because of its supposed impropriety. At the very least, it should prompt us to view God's incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth in a fresh and scandalous light, a perspective that is hardly out of character for a gospel which proclaims that the divine love is often a surprising affront to our assumptions of human righteousness.

In addition, we might need to take another look at the debates

of Nicaea and Chalcedon.¹⁵ On those occasions there was a persistent worry that any insistence on Jesus' full humanity would lead to a denial of his divinity. The fears of Athanasius and Cyril led them to insist that the Word *became man* but did not come into *a man*. "And they were prevented from understanding that men like Theodore and Nestorius really were arguing (as we can now see) for a genuine and deeply *personal* union of God and man in Christ—however inadequate their vocabulary. . . ." ¹⁶

Thus, the issue of Jesus' sexuality is not simply a curious historical debate. Nor is it an inappropriate sort of "prurient interest." If the docetic heresy, though early condemned by the church, continues to linger in current Christian mentality, this suggests something about our own salvation and possibilities for wholeness. For, if we are not really sure about the full humanity of the one whom we call Truly Human, we can only be confused about what authentic humanity might mean for us. If we try to take Jesus with utter seriousness and yet uneasily retreat from thoughts of his sexuality, or even recoil with repugnance, it is also likely that we shall either deny much of our own sexuality or else find considerable difficulty integrating our Christological beliefs into the reality of our lives as body-selves.¹⁷

But the Word did become flesh. Logos, Cosmic Meaning, was embodied, and our own embodiment has been given definition and vindication in Jesus Christ. What is at stake—and here the Nestorians were right—is whether or not it is possible, however partially we may experience it, that there be a genuine and deeply personal union of God and our embodied selves. If we deny the radicality of God's incarnation in Jesus, we may well persist in a vain attempt to be more spiritual than God. The possibility of our own full humanity, after all, decisively hinges upon "the humanity of God," (to use Karl Barth's fine phrase). That humanity of God is an unexpected scandal, and the issue of Jesus' sexuality is an important place to test our commitment to it. In those central symbols of incarnation and resurrection Christian faith affirms that God embraces fleshly, bodily life. God invites us to do so.¹⁸

Justification as God's Acceptance of Our Bodily Life

Grace is "God's generosity in personal action."¹⁹ It is not a

supernatural "something" which God gives to us. Rather, it is a gracious personal relationship, the gift of the accepting personal Presence itself. Gregory Baum puts it well in saying that "the author of reality is on our side. The ground of being is not far away, hostile or indifferent to us; the deepest dimension of the total reality facing us is for us. There is no reason to be afraid of the world . . . for the ultimate root of all being protects and favors human life. Despite the suffering and evil in the world . . . we are summoned to believe that the ultimate principle of reality is love itself."²⁰

God's radical, unconditional, and unearned acceptance of us is a fitting contemporary translation of justification by grace. In his powerful sermon, "You Are Accepted," Paul Tillich evocatively states, "It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction and composure have become intolerable to us. It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: 'You are accepted. *You are accepted*, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. *Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!*' If that happens to us, we experience grace."²¹

When we have experienced that kind of acceptance, even momentarily, we know that everything is transformed. Though recognition of this frequently has been neglected in Christian theology, God's word of acceptance is addressed to the total and sexual self, not simply to a disembodied personality. We might extend Tillich's language in this manner: You are accepted, the total you. Your body, which you often reject, is accepted by that which is greater than you. Your sexual feelings and unfulfilled yearnings are accepted. You are accepted in your ascetic attempts at self-justification or in your hedonistic alienation from the true meaning of your sexuality. You are accepted in those moments of sexual fan-

tasy which come unbidden and which both delight and disturb you. You are accepted in your femininity and in your masculinity, for you have elements of both. You are accepted in your heterosexuality and in your homosexuality, and you have elements of both. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted as a sexual person! If that happens to you, you experience grace.

An incarnational, non-dogmatic understanding of acceptance takes seriously its enfleshed mediation. Such grace can be mediated by words of Scripture and tradition. It can be conveyed through the church's liturgy. Yet, in regard to sexual acceptance, tradition and liturgy at times are more alienating than gracious, and Scripture is frequently interpreted doctetically. So the gracious Word often becomes flesh in ways not usually labeled religious. It is mediated through sexual communion in ecstasy and playfulness with the beloved partner. It comes as healing through "the laying on of hands"—the spontaneous hand of a friend on one's shoulder. Such grace is mediated by parents when the child receives (as in breast feeding, sensitive toilet training, physical expressions of affection, and appropriate sex education) a sense of the trustworthiness and goodness of his or her own body rather than a legacy of mistrust and shame. Grace comes through human agency in struggle and judgment as well—as when the Women's Movement gives a woman new self-respect and power born from her pain, and when in judgment on distorted masculinity it opens a man to new ranges of emotion and bodily self-acceptance.

Thus, beyond the dualistic alienations we experience the gracious resurrection of the body-self. I really am *one* person. Body and mind are one; my body is me as my mind is me. Beyond the imprisonment of rigid sex roles I am freed to be a *person*. And in such resurrection I discover that I belong intimately to others and intimately to the world.

We live in grace, but we also continue in sin, and the experience of radical acceptance and God's resurrection of the body is never unambiguous. Reinhold Niebuhr thus declares, "The element of sin in the experience is not due to the fact that sex is in any sense sinful as such. But once sin is presupposed, that is, once the original harmony of nature is disturbed by . . . self love, the instincts of sex are particularly effective tools for both the assertion of self and the

flight from self."²² In our experience of sexuality there is often a bewildering confusion of elements. If in our estrangement we never utterly lose our original unity, so also in the gracious experience of acceptance and reunification, estrangement is not totally or permanently conquered. The glorious oneness I experienced begins to disintegrate as body and mind once more compete for the title of being me. And the glorious liberty of the children of God once more submits to old and fearful assumptions as men and women imprison themselves and each other in dominance and submission.

Thus, to speak of—and to celebrate—God's radically accepting love does not require us to engage in a romanticized idealism about human perfection under grace. Nevertheless, when we are open to the divine acceptance, in some measure everything is transformed. If the old fears and sexual dualisms do return, still we are not the same as before. "Grace aims at fulfillment," as Harold Ditmanson rightly affirms. "It is the operative power of God's personal action, moving us toward that which God intends us to be. The purpose of creaturely existence is that each of God's creatures achieves the fullest excellence of which its nature is capable. Any thwarting of fulfillment, therefore, is really a wrong against the basic purpose of creation itself."²³

This affirmation leads us to grace's second dimension: sanctification. If that traditional word is less than intelligible to many modern ears, contemporary equivalents are appropriate: growth, fulfillment, God's empowerment toward our greater wholeness. To explore what this might mean sexually, I have selected several facets of our bodily experience: growth in self-acceptance, in sensuousness, in knowing, in freedom, and in androgyny. While each of these is an expression of love's fulfillment, a fuller discussion of love will await the next chapter.

Self-Acceptance

It is not always easy to accept love—either from others or from ourselves. On the issue of self-love Christian ethical reflection has been notably divided over the centuries, a matter we shall look at in more detail later. At this point I want to consider some of the dynamics of self-rejection and self-acceptance in the sexual person's growth toward greater wholeness.

Among the related psychodynamics are shame and guilt. These are constructive signals of residual moral health in many instances. If we willfully violate the personhood of another and do not experience shame and guilt, there is something wrong. But what of these emotions when they are directed at ourselves because of our bodies and our sexuality as such? One psychiatrist, Alexander Lowen, declares that guilt frequently "arises when a negative moral judgment is imposed on a bodily function that is beyond the control of the ego or conscious mind. To feel guilty about sexual desires, for example, makes no biological sense. . . . If this desire is judged morally wrong, it means that the conscious mind has turned against the body."²⁴ To be sure, some sexual desires are an appropriate reason for guilt. The point of concern, however, is when guilt and shame are felt simply because of any kind of sexual desire. That is rejection of the body-self.

Another psychiatrist, Theodore Isaac Rubin, observes: "Indirect self-hate . . . is pervasive and global because it affects every aspect of personality or character structure. . . . Neurotic states such as martyrdom, masochism, self-effacement, symbiotic and overwhelming dependency, grandiosity, aggression, despotism, perfectionism, sadism, vindictiveness, withdrawal, resignation are all functions of self-hate."²⁵ If initially this sweeping conclusion sounds a bit extreme the psychiatric evidence on closer examination is quite compelling. Indirect self-hate is a rejection of one's actual self: who we are actually, in emotional health and neurosis, in wholeness and estrangement, in grace and sin. The idealized image of the self, on the other hand, is the shining illusion of impossible perfection. We can use such an image to protect ourselves against our feelings of fragility. But because the image is unattainable, hurt pride and self-hate emerge together with resentment of others and then more attempts to achieve "glory."

In sexual activity this works-righteousness syndrome becomes performance anxiety. "Performance involves self-consciousness, self-judgment, fear of self-hate and fear of derision from other people. In performing I split myself into two people, the one doing the performing and the one watching the performance and also watching audience response."²⁶ But such self-conscious splitting, watching, and judging both nurture my anxiety and undermine my inte-

grated communion with the other. I make myself feel less in order to perform better.

Lowen summarizes the results of self-rejection: "I would suggest that the common denominator in all neurotic behavior patterns is a diminuation of the sense of self. This includes a loss of feeling of identity, a reduced awareness of one's individuality, a decrease in self-expression, and a diminished capacity for pleasure."²⁷ Christian teaching too often has had enormous difficulty distinguishing between creative self-love and selfishness. Too frequently they have been equated without the realization that egotism and selfishness arise from inadequate self-acceptance rather than from too much of it. As a result the familiar polemic against selfishness can undermine, unwittingly, that self-acceptance which is integral to genuine faith and outgoing love. Women in particular have suffered, socialized into derivative identities and nurtured in the supposed virtue of giving without receiving. The all-too-frequent result is the tendency to cling to self-negation as if too much affirmation and success would depress them. This is one of the tragedies of sexist dualism.

But self-acceptance is related to the ability to say No. Those of either sex who feel driven to accede to all requests and demands of others are expressing a consuming anxiety about their basic acceptability. The ability to say No at the appropriate moment is the ability to resist the forces of depersonalization which surround us. It is essential to our humanity and our being-for-others.

Self-acceptance thus carries with it the ability to distinguish between feelings and desires, on the one hand, and genuine needs, on the other. We know that we ourselves are the source of our feelings and desires, and we can accept that. We also know that some of our desires do not represent humanly fulfilling needs. Thus we can distinguish between those which can be fulfilled with constructive and enriching effects for ourselves and others, and those which if acted upon might impoverish and destroy. But, whatever our desires, they do not embarrass us in such a way that we need to push them out of consciousness, for to do that is to make them demonic. Instead, we can recognize them for what they are; we can name them and thus take the compelling power out of them.²⁸

Genuine self-acceptance is basic to humility. Authentic humility is not self-deprecation. It is realistic self-appreciation founded upon

the experiential conviction of divine acceptance. It is the security of self that does not compulsively demand narcissistic support and constant affirmation from others. In contrast, self-rejection feeds upon illusions about the self's competence and virtue, often manifesting a need to be universally loved and admired. But such illusions mask a curious combination of arrogance and self-hate, pretense and anger.

Humility is a basic acceptance of the body-self. The physical bodies of most of us fall far short of the ideals portrayed by the advertising industry. Lumpy where they should be slim, skinny where they should be firm, wrinkled where they should be youthful, they are, nevertheless, us, "warts and all." And they are graceful bodies because they have been graced.

Self-acceptance thus personalizes the body. There is psychological evidence that creative thinking, depending as it does upon the free flow of unconscious ideas, best occurs when the body is most alive and unburdened.²⁹ The body's personalization thus expresses itself in the mind. The intimate links with the emotions are also very real. Depression, for example, is frequently connected to the lack of body integration with self.³⁰ When we are in touch with our bodies we are aware of bodily tensions and their causes, and when depressive patients become attuned to their bodies, depressive tendencies often are eliminated. This does not mean the elimination of sadness or anger. Rather, it means a deep awareness of what gives rise to these feelings, how they can best be expressed, and what steps can be taken to cope with them.

This suggests that self-acceptance gives rise to the spontaneity of the body-self. Wooden, mechanical behavior is born of the need to comply rigidly with dictates heard from within and without the self. But when we receive the security not to demean ourselves, we do not deaden any aspects of ourselves. Our resources of energy and time are not dissipated in useless rituals or in the search for illusionary fulfillment. They are available for feeling and acting with spontaneous aliveness.³¹

Self-acceptance thus brings with it a profound sense that I am the body which I live, and in consequence I will not tend to minimize the personal significance of the activities which I carry on through my body.³² This gives shape to the style of my relationships

with others. A positive awareness of my bodily basis of selfhood gives the confidence that I have a real self with which to relate to others. This diminishes the desire to shift responsibility for my life to them, or to be absorbed by them, or, conversely, to absorb them and impose my ideas on them. I am I and they are they. We are unique selves interested in communication and communion, not in conquest or dependency.³³

The resurrection of the body in self-acceptance seems to bring with it a new openness to the world itself. In John Woolman's words, "The world smells different!" Paul's theology of the resurrection is instructive here.³⁴ In his understanding, resurrection has both continuity and discontinuity with the body. Flesh and blood *as we know them* cannot inherit the kingdom, it is true. But the resurrected state will *not* be bodiless. Interpretations of Paul's view which put all of the emphasis on discontinuity with the flesh simply ignore one whole side of his position. There will be a new body which we can only dimly comprehend now. And this is corroborated by Paul's hints about the destiny of the material universe. "It is not to be scrapped as of no permanent significance. For it is in Christ that all things exist, and God's plan for the fulness of time is 'to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.'" ³⁵ Thus, the material universe is not to be seen as emptiness or illusion. Rather, the story is one of a transformation of the material world so that it is no longer in bondage to decay but attains the glorious liberty of God's own children. And this sort of transformation of the world *as we experience it* can begin now with the resurrection of the body in that new self-acceptance made possible by God's grace.

Sensuousness

In reflecting on sensuousness as another mark of growth in sexual wholeness through God's grace, another comment on the Song of Songs is appropriate. It is a sensuous poem of love, celebrating in an unparalleled biblical way the joys of erotic communion. One interpreter writes, "Love poetry is carnal knowledge, a hymn to the beauty of the body and the goodness of creation, to the sheer joy of bodily existence and its pleasures. In love the body is a means of grace, and the graceful forms of the body are a means of love."³⁶

The Song is a particularly significant commentary on graceful sensuousness, for in its lines there is a striking absence of the alienating dualisms. In contrast to Hellenistic, spiritualistic dualism, the lovers in this poem embrace their sexuality joyously and shamelessly. Their nakedness before each other is cause for delight. Their desire for each other sexually is treated not as judgment but as promise of fulfillment. And, in contrast to accounts of sexist dualism, the Song displays a notable absence of male domination and female subordination. Mutuality and cohumanity are evident. Unlike the woman in the other garden, Eve, the woman of this erotic garden has an identity which is not derived from the man, nor is her sexuality defined by its procreative function. She has her own autonomy. She is the man's full equal—in work, in initiative, in identity.

It is true that the Song borders on the idyllic. "And in a curious reversal of the mythic and the historical, the prehistorical Genesis saga gives a more profound and realistic portrayal of the human sexual story; while the Canticles, which is a real historical tale of two lovers, borders on sexual myth with its celebration of eroticism which knows no sin, no prohibitions, no disobedience, no betrayal."³⁷ Nevertheless, the Song of Songs stands as an important and unique scriptural portrait of sensuousness. It is the sensuousness made possible by grace. Though Yahweh is not mentioned by name, surely the divine Presence is in that erotic garden, else the dualistic alienations of sexism and spiritualism could not be so markedly transcended.

As we have seen, however, much in the Christian tradition has been highly suspicious of such eroticism. If to many earlier theologians sexual desire was inherently mated to lust and hence to sin, numerous contemporary Christians are wary for similar reasons. The celebration of sensuality, they seem to believe, is a dangerous invitation to depersonalized sex, sex unredeemed by love, and sensual hedonism which seeks sexual pleasure for its own sake only. Neither do I welcome such results, but the fears of sensuality and eroticism as such are misplaced.

For one thing, it is a gross oversimplification to regard impersonal sexual acts (which appear to be done only for pleasure and without love for the partner) simply as expressions of animal sexuality. The British psychologist W. R. D. Fairbairn provides an important cor-

rective at this point. The erotic dynamism of the human self, he contends, is something which intrinsically aims not primarily at the pleasure of the senses, but "at something more commensurate with its source in the whole person, namely, union with the other person as person."³⁸ Even in impersonal sex what we see is not merely animalistic sexuality but rather "desperate lunges, by an ego already torn apart under the pressure of various conflicts, at reestablishing some emotional links with the world. . . . Eroticism and perversions, which to the onlooker—and even to the subject—may seem anonymous and mechanical, the result of a blind, obsessive alien instinct, are in fact efforts of the shattered self to salvage something—almost anything—of natural emotional relationships."³⁹ Fairbairn concludes that only when the individual's deprivation of love becomes relatively unbearable does the libidinal drive lead to hedonistic and mechanical relationships.

!! The affirmation of sensuality is not an inherently dangerous invitation to depersonalized sex. In point of fact, it seems to be quite the opposite: the unloving suppression of the self's erotic needs eventually nurtures aberrant sex. Mary Calderone, the dean of American sex educators, underscores this: "The price paid by individuals, both as children and as adults, for the ignorance and fear inflicted upon them by the society because of their normally occurring erotic behavior is very high, whether in terms of eventual sexual inadequacy in marriage, or of compulsive behavior such as promiscuousness (heterosexual or homosexual), sadomasochism, fetishism, voyeurism, exhibitionism, or repetitious recourse to hard core pornography for the only sexual reactions many sexually crippled individuals are able to achieve."⁴⁰

13 17th y. Christianly speaking, the issue has elements of the gospel and law problem. While law is good and necessary, it can be misused to suppress the erotic and hold it in check by rigid disciplines buttressed by fear. But the unintended result is frequently the very sexual compulsiveness which is so dreaded. The approach of gospel may well be a trusting affirmation of love's sensuousness. Such trust is grounded in the confidence that our Creator has so designed the self's erotic dynamism that it is intrinsically aimed not at impersonal sexual hedonism but at personal sexual communion.

Sensuousness suggests that there is a physiology of grace to which

we ought to give attention, along with the psychology of grace. Once again we can speak of the graceful body. In a non-theological sense, this is the quality of a person whose body is free from chronic tension, whose movements are spontaneous and yet coordinated and effective. In spite of their apparent contradiction, both spontaneity and self-control are present. Self-control implies self-possession, the attribute of those persons in touch with their feelings and in command of their movements. Since their motility is not constricted by chronic muscular tensions, they differ from the controlled and compulsive individuals whose behavior is a reaction to their tensions. Current bioenergetic therapy thus seems to demonstrate that the freer persons become in their movement the more self-control they gain.⁴¹ Theologically speaking, this is one of the marvelous paradoxes of incarnated grace—that spontaneity and self-control merge in the sensuous body.

Growth in sensuousness also means an increased capacity to give and receive pleasure. Pleasure is more than simply good feelings. It is the union of bodily, emotional, mental, and spiritual feelings in ways that the person experiences markedly positive sensations about the self. While the source of pleasure may well be outside the self, it is the self who feels pleasure. We can imagine a continuum of feelings in the body. On the positive side of that continuum there is movement from the sense of ease, relaxation, and harmony—to greater awareness of softness, vibrancy, and buoyancy—to an excitement which is lively and graceful—to the explosion of ecstatic pleasure.⁴²

Pleasure involves a distinct sense of happiness and, in its more intense moments, self-transcendence. In the climax of sexual communion, orgasmic pleasure can reach the heights of ecstasy in which the body-self feels profoundly unified, taken out of itself into another, yet intensely itself. There is a self-abandonment, a willingness to risk the depths of experience. In pleasure of whatever sort, the will seems to recede and the ego surrenders some of its control over the body. Self-conscious deliberation is replaced by absorption into feeling. A psychiatrist observes, "Pleasure cannot be possessed. One must give one's self over to the pleasure, that is, allow the pleasure to take possession of one's being. Whereas the response of pain involves a heightening of self-consciousness, the response of

pleasure entails and demands a decrease of self-consciousness. Pleasure eludes the self-conscious individual, as it is denied to the egotist. To have pleasure one has to 'let go,' that is, allow the body to respond freely."⁴³

This seems dialectically related to a variety of qualities which are important to our human wholeness. Creativity is one. "Without pleasure, there can be no creativity. Without a creative attitude to life, there will be no pleasure. . . . Pleasure in living encourages creativity and expansiveness, and creativity adds to the pleasure and joy of living."⁴⁴ Ego strength is another related quality. Psychologically, it strongly appears that "the strength of the ego determines the intensity of the sexual drive and . . . the amount of sexual pleasure and satisfaction influences the strength of the ego."⁴⁵

There is also the dialectical relationship between commitment and pleasure. We experience pleasure in the full commitment of mind and body to worthwhile activity, and the pleasure experienced in that process enhances our commitment to the activity.

And commitment is a dimension of love. Love is necessary for pleasure, but the reverse is also true. Love involves the commitment which makes pleasure possible. Our work is never pleasurable without some commitment to the task and to those persons involved in and affected by our work. But such work commitment becomes a burden and onerous duty (even if willingly borne) without the experience of pleasure. So also in interpersonal relationships, the amount of pleasure is directly proportional to the amount of commitment and feeling which we invest in the relationship. Love gives it security. Love is the promise that the pleasure of today will also be tomorrow's.

In sum, the gospel's eternal paradox is characteristic of pleasure: the one who directly searches for it as the major goal will never find pleasure as fully as the one who is willing to let go—in creativity, commitment, and love.

Yet, a cloud of churchly suspicion still hangs over pleasure. While many theologians and ecclesiastical groups have rejected the anti-sex extremes of early Christian history, and while they now pronounce sex to be holy, they still leave the subject of sensuous pleasure largely unexplored and largely unaffirmed. But why does this suspicion linger, particularly if we are to renounce spiritualistic

dualism and if we are to affirm that the primary purpose of sex is loving communion?⁴⁶ The persisting worry about boldly affirming sexual pleasure seems directly related to the fear that it will become self-indulgent and destructive of the personal communion of love for which intercourse is intended by God.

But this assumption needs to be challenged, and Francois Chirpaz's phenomenology of sexual pleasure assists us. Chirpaz observes that while sexuality receives its full meaning in the deep interpersonal relationship it can give, in everyday experience sexual desires often are not immediately *interpersonal*. At such times we simply seem to feel sexual desire as such. But this has to do with the reality of our body-selves. The desires awaken "the thickness of one's flesh." "In sexual pleasure one experiences a coincidence with one's own body. My body is completely close, identical with me." It is the "fleshly closeness of the self to the self." "In pleasure, the body . . . is revealed in thickness . . . the density of being human, the heaviness of being material . . . [but] this density is not a weight to bear because in it the reverberation of pleasure becomes so much the greater. Only here does pleasure take all its fullness. . . ." ⁴⁷ In sensual pleasure, then, I enjoy and love my bodily self and in this experience realize the coincidence of self and body. Dualism is overcome in reunion.

As John Giles Milhaven emphasizes, it is precisely this momentarily-healed self who is able to experience the depth of communion with the partner. Such communion, though it is possible to some extent even in moments of our greater estrangement, realizes new dimensions when it comes in moments of our healing. For, when in bodily pleasure I experience once again my essential unity, I can be that much more open to the other. There seems to be a spontaneous movement from my own enjoyment of myself to my enjoyment of my partner, and in this spontaneity there is something of a miracle of transformation. It is not that my conscious altruistic motives *direct* me to enjoy my partner's pleasure as well as my own. It seems truer to experience to say that in my own experience of body-self reunion I simply, and miraculously, experience reunion with the beloved other.⁴⁸

Then the giving and receiving of sexual pleasure enhance the pleasure itself and facilitate greater body-self harmony. Interper-

knowns to pleasure well living by living

sonal communion nurtures self-communion, and this is spontaneously expressed in the desire for interpersonal communion. Such sensual pleasure is a gift of divine grace. This sensuality is God's invitation to reunion—with both self and the loved companion. And in this reunion God is experienced, whether there is consciousness of the divine name or not.

Closely related to pleasure, play is also a form of sensuousness. It is the realm of the child, and of the child within the adult. Play involves the ability to let the mind wander without inhibitions, the ability to let the body be free and loose. In our society men find this particularly difficult because of their "masculine" self-image and its pressures toward control, competence, and the rational work ethic. But, "to play is to learn to trust that the environment will not wound or maim and to relax long enough so that one's own vulnerability can be enjoyed."⁴⁹ Playfulness involves the devaluation of control as the prime element in the activity. It is often unstructured. It is egalitarian, not authoritarian. It values and depends on cooperation, openness, and freedom.

Play and pleasure are mated in sensuous sexuality. Sidney Callahan writes, "Play is intimately related to culture, contemplation, and through human sexuality to human wholeness and healthy equilibrium. With sexual play, pleasure must be the mainspring of activity; pleasure is a means of recovering and enjoying . . . [our] unconscious dimensions . . . which are not tapped in rational, purposive activity like work or abstract thought."⁵⁰ She perceives the irrational dimension of our sexuality as intrinsic to play, and also to our own humanness. While we have been conditioned to fear the irrational aspects—frivolity, pleasure-loving, purposelessness, violent desire and violent release, passive surrender to the involuntary—these elements of sexual play are immensely important. For, it is "joyously human to actively accept and cooperate with forces beyond human mastery. A lover can welcome eroticism and passion just as a mother in childbirth can consciously and exultingly welcome the expulsive waves arising from within."⁵¹

Faith affirms that the capacity for such sexual play arises from grace. I am open to trust and spontaneity, to surrender and to the involuntary, only as I am able to trust my beloved and my own body-self. But this ability to trust is not an achievement. It is a gift.

Growth in sensuousness is also marked by the diffusion of the erotic throughout the entire body. If the narrowing of sexuality's focus to the genitals is a mark of alienated sexuality, its diffusion throughout the body reflects its sanctification. Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, and Alan Watts are particularly suggestive at this point. Each of them acknowledges a debt to Freud, whose notion of "polymorphous perversity" (an unfortunately misleading term) referred to the diffusion of the erotic throughout the infant's body. But each of these three writers in contrast to Freud believes that such diffusion needs to be recaptured by the adult as well.

Marcuse contends that we all long to experience the entire body as a source of sexual pleasure once again. If Wilhelm Reich believed that human happiness is linked to the genitalization of sexuality, in Marcuse's social philosophy such genitalization is reactionary. It leaves the body desexualized and thus susceptible to economic and political exploitation.⁵²

Norman O. Brown goes further. "The adult sexual perversions, like normal adult sexuality, are well-organized sexual tyrannies: they too represent an exaggerated concentration on one of the many erotic potentialities present in the human body."⁵³ Brown envisions a truly non-repressive civilization in which sexuality would be undifferentiated. Not only would the individual's entire body then possess the capacity for sexual awareness and pleasure, but also the sharp distinctions between male and female would pale.

It remains to Alan Watts to characterize with greatest sensitivity some of the possibilities of sexual diffusion. He is here speaking about maithunga, an Oriental ideal of sexual love, but his words are germane to western Christians: "It is not quite correct to say that such a relationship goes far beyond the 'merely sexual,' for it would be better to say that sexual contact irradiates every aspect of the encounter, spreading its warmth into work and conversation outside the bounds of actual 'love-making.' Sexuality is not a separate compartment of human life; it is a radiance pervading every human relationship, but assuming a particular intensity at certain points. Conversely, we might say that sexuality is a special mode or degree of total intercourse of . . . [persons] and nature. . . . [In regard to the man-woman relationship] the psychic counterpart of this bodily and sensuous intimacy is a similar openness of attention

to each other's thought—a form of communion which can be as sexually 'charged' as physical contact. This is the feeling that one can express one's thoughts to the other just as they are, since there is not the slightest compulsion to assume a pretended character. This is perhaps the rarest and most difficult aspect of any human relationship. . . . Yet this is quite the most important part of a deep sexual relationship, and it is in some way understood even when thoughts are left unsaid. . . . To unveil the flow of thought can therefore be an even greater sexual intimacy than physical nakedness."⁶⁴

The resexualization of the entire body, the movement away from the genital tyranny in relationships, the eroticization of the world so that the environment's deliciously sensuous qualities are felt—these things are possible, faith affirms, by the grace of God. To the extent that I can accept my acceptance, experience my body-self as one, and know that my sexuality is richly good, to this extent my sexual awareness and feeling inevitably expand beyond a narrow genital focus. Then I will be less fearful about recognizing and celebrating the erotic dimensions in a whole variety of my interpersonal relationships. I will be able to perceive the sensuousness of shared personal communication, and of the environment's movements, shapes, sounds, and smells.

This sensuous diffusion thus undergirds our capacities to experience beauty. Sexuality is that living and flowing energy which invites us into communion with other realities in creation. Philip Sherrard writes as a specialist in eastern Christianity, where (in spite of some of its other dualisms) the affirmation of God's self-mediation through the material world and its beauty has been particularly strong. Sherrard believes it no accident that there is little in western Christian literature about a positive view of sexuality, and correspondingly there is little about beauty, especially that of the human body and of nature. With the exception of a few authors, most seem closer to the spirit of Tertullian in believing that natural beauty ought to be concealed "since it is dangerous to those who look upon it." Ultimately (as even the negative instances demonstrate), our awareness of creation and its beauty is a sexual awareness. "Indeed, there is an intimate, unbreakable link between sexuality and a sense of beauty. . . . So much is this the case that it

can be said quite categorically that those who have no living awareness of their sexuality have no sense of beauty."⁶⁵

Knowing

We think with our bodies as well as with our minds. This is inevitable, for the self is essentially one being. As the alienated body nurtures certain patterns of the mind, so does the reconciled body.

Tillich's distinction between "ontological reason" and "technical reason" suggests one way in which the body-mind connection can be seen. Ontological reason is "the structure of the mind which enables the mind to grasp and transform reality." By contrast, technical reason deals much more narrowly with the cognitive realm and within that area with "only those cognitive acts which deal with the discovery of means for ends."⁶⁶ Both types of reason are necessary, he argues, but under the conditions of estrangement the depth of ontological reason is lost and technical reason becomes dominant.

There is then an important distinction between that type of knowing which is participation in reality, communion, and awareness of mystery, with that type of knowing which is possession, control, technique, and means to ends. When the divorce between these modes of knowing occurs, as it frequently does, it is not only a divorce in our mind but also (and quite fundamentally) in our sexuality. The split between those two modes is a split born of sexist dualism. Knowledge as possession, control, and technique has become a way of knowing socially identified as masculine. Men are supposed to achieve, compete, control, win. Women are supposed to nurture, respond, care, relate. When technical reason becomes dominant and determinative, we see not simply the picture of the alienated reason but also the picture of the alienated body-self. It is the healing of the body-self into a more androgynous whole which affords a return to ways of knowing that are also participation and communion. But before we examine androgyny more closely, consider several other facets of knowing and sexual growth.

Increased reconciliation of the self and the sexual body is likely to make one's patterns of knowing less predictable, more creative and imaginative. Already we have seen some psychiatric evidence

that indicates the vital connection between the body's aliveness and spontaneity with that of the mind. The same connection can be seen in the relation between institutional socialization and sexuality. Social theorists describe the manner in which society is formed by a series of institutions—families, schools, religious groups, economic organizations, the military, government, and so on. Persons are socialized by and into these institutions into certain roles and patterns of self-understanding, behavior, and thinking. Institutions tend to place a premium upon patterns of individual thought and action that are predictable and which serve the institution's purposes.

This is quite understandable. We need institutions, and institutions need harmony and coherence on the part of their members. But institutional patterns also need to be challenged, changed, and transformed with regularity, and the "one-dimensional person" who has been so thoroughly socialized by the group is not likely to rock the boat. Yet, as Urban T. Holmes contends, "Contact with our sexuality in any depth opens the self to aspects of our inner life which have not been conditioned by the social structures, since institutional control of sexuality is notoriously superficial. Hence, the person in touch with this runs the risk of living out of a self-understanding that is not predictable in terms of the society as a whole. This is risky and threatening."⁶⁷ It can also be significantly creative.

The reconciliation of the body-self also has an important effect on our tolerance of ambiguity. Each of us is a complex unity, comprising within ourselves an immensely varied mix of feelings, goals, needs, purposes, and patterns, not all of which are congruent and harmonious. Insofar as we try to earn our ultimate acceptability, insofar as we try to justify ourselves by our own purity (with whatever definition of purity we might hold), we will be threatened by the ambiguity within. We will be prone to insist on utter consistency, clarity, singleness of definition and motive. We will tend to project outward onto others our inner contradictions, but we will not recognize that we have done so because of alienation from the feeling body.

But reconciliation with the body brings a fresh and more accurate recognition of our feelings. The more we internalize the body-self's acceptance, the more we can "own" the complexity of motives, goals, and needs which comprise who we are. To own these does

not necessarily mean to approve them all. It does mean that we will live with greater honesty, with more empathy toward those who differ from us, with less need to project onto others, and with more trust in the One who accepts us in spite of who we are. And such is the invitation to grow toward that which we might yet be. Again, Mary Douglas' anthropological studies of purity rituals in various societies force her to a conclusion of no small importance for a theology of grace: "There is hardly any pollution which does not have some primary physiological reference. As life is in the body it cannot be rejected outright. And as life must be affirmed, the most complete philosophies, as William James put it, must find some ultimate way of affirming that which has been rejected."⁶⁸

Finally, our ways of knowing are always wedded to the ways of our loving, and love is always an affair of the body-self and not just the mind. "Reason," as Daniel Day Williams observes, "will be informed by the loves of the reasoner, and distorted by the corruption of . . . [those] loves."⁶⁹ And as Martin Buber has reminded us, our love for another person opens the door to a whole new dimension of knowledge which can never be found without it. But love and sexuality can never be separated, for both are the impulse toward communion. Thus, it also makes eminent sense to say that reason will always be informed by the sexuality of the reasoner—distorted by its alienation and directed and enriched in that sexuality's reconciliation.

Freedom

Sexual growth in the context of divine acceptance is growth into freedom. The psychologist Abraham Maslow, speaking of love and sexuality in "self-actualizing people," furnishes helpful clues. The subjects whom he studied in this regard "were loved and were loving, and are loved and are loving."⁷⁰ Here are his characterizations of their sexuality:

- They enjoy genital sex wholeheartedly, far beyond the possibility of the average person, and yet specific sex acts do not play any central role in their philosophies of life. "In self-actualizing people the orgasm is simultaneously more important and less important than in average people."

- The sex act itself may bring on mystical experience at times, yet on other occasions may be experienced lightheartedly and playfully.

- There is "a healthy acceptance of the self and of others. Their talk about sex is considerably more free and casual and unconventional than the average. . . ."

- Such persons clearly recognize their sexual attraction to others, but they are less driven to secretive affairs precisely because their own marriages are profoundly satisfying.

- "They made no really sharp differentiation between the roles and personalities of the two sexes. . . . These people were all so certain of their maleness or femaleness that they did not mind taking on some of the cultural aspects of the opposite sex role."

- "[Another] aspect of the healthy love relationship that was very clear in my subjects . . . [was] fun, merriment, elation, feeling of well-being, gaiety."

- "[Still another characteristic was] the affirmation of the other's individuality, the eagerness for the growth of the other, the essential respect for . . . [the partner's] unique personality."

This rather remarkable portrait of freedom and responsiveness in sexual expression is obviously grounded in the sense of security in the persons here described. Maslow himself makes a powerful statement about grace (though in secular language) in his concluding statement: "I have suggested that self-actualizers can be defined as people who are no longer motivated by the needs for safety, belongingness, love, status, and self-respect because these needs *have already been satisfied*." If his wording sounds too optimistic and lacking in the recognition of our continuing sin, we can nevertheless affirm the truth toward which he is pointing. Even the partial and incomplete healing of the body-self, by divine grace, does nurture something of the freedom which Maslow has described.

Christian faith knows that freedom always depends on trust. Contemporary psychiatry is teaching us that trust in one's own body is

essential to personal health. Alexander Lowen has described many of his patients in terms of their fears. They are afraid to feel the depths of their sadness. They are afraid of their suppressed panic or terror or rage. To confront these fears the patient must let go of control and thus learn that they are not as threatening as they seem. Lowen comments, "Letting go of ego control means giving in to the body in its involuntary aspect. It means letting the body take over. But this is what patients cannot do. *They feel the body will betray them.* They do not trust it and have no faith in it. They are afraid that if the body takes over, it will expose their weakness, demolish their pretentiousness, reveal their sadness, and vent their fury. Yes, it will do that. It will destroy the facades that people erect to hide their true selves from themselves and from the world. But it will also open a new depth of being and add a richness to life compared to which the wealth of the world is a mere trifle."⁶¹ To this secular statement of grace I would add only this: when our trust in God is a trust with the body as well as the mind, the body can become the means of our liberation.

Androgyny

The word "androgyny" literally means the union of the male (*andro*) and the female (*gyne*) in one human personality. Its literal meaning, however, is misleading. More accurately, the term means the bringing together of personality characteristics traditionally or conventionally thought of as masculine with those thought of as feminine so that such characteristics are creatively present in the same individual.

Grace aims at the fullest possible development of each human self. Descriptions such as autonomous and dependent, rational and emotional, initiating and nurturing, cognitive and intuitive, assertive and receptive have been split apart into gender stereotypes. But the growth and development of full personhood requires both sets of traits.

It is important to recognize what androgyny is not. It is neither hermaphroditism nor bisexuality. The former is an abnormality in which the physiological sexual characteristics of both male and female are found in the same individual. The latter refers to the

psychic orientation of those who in their adult lives feel a strong genital attraction for persons of both sexes. Androgyny is neither.

Granted, the term itself is not free from difficulty. To some it suggests the virtual erosion of maleness and femaleness and the creation of some third kind of "unisex" being. Others might object that the term does not adequately express the plurality of ways in which individuals, regardless of their sex, can find their own individualized humanness. We can use the term as a helpful one, however, even if it may be susceptible to misunderstanding at points. In our present state of sex-role consciousness, androgyny is at least a necessary transitional concept pointing toward "the transformation of past role expectations into more humanized ways of being."⁶²

A biblical vision of redemption points to a human liberation beyond oppressive sex roles. True, sexist dualism unfortunately is present in the Bible, as we have seen. But there is also present a strong "prophetic non-patriarchalism."⁶³ The Exodus narratives powerfully convey the basic theme of freedom from all forms of human oppression. "Of special interest are the women who nurture this revolution: Hebrew midwives, an Egyptian princess with her maidens, and Hebrew slaves, mother and daughter, unite to defy Pharaoh, the male oppressor. Alone they take the initiative that leads to deliverance."⁶⁴

Further, Israel's understanding of God has implications for human androgyny. "Unlike fertility gods, Yahweh is neither male nor female but Creator and Lord who embraces and transcends both sexes."⁶⁵ And in the New Testament, Jesus' whole message and ministry declares the liberation of all human beings. The roots of his teaching are not in the rigid Judaism of the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, a time when ritual restrictiveness had led to the cultic degradation of womanhood. Rather, his roots were in the prophetic Hebraism of earlier centuries. And it was the great prophets who not only decried the injustices of their societies, including the oppression of women, but who also used the semantics of the feminine as well as of the masculine in speaking about God.⁶⁶

The Russian theologian-philosopher Nicolas Berdiaev was pressing the implications of androgyny for Christian faith as early as 1914. Years before our present consciousness of this possibility he declared that there is a fundamental androgyny of the human being

created in the likeness and image of God. Nor have the sex roles of the world destroyed this. "In fact, 'in the beginning' it is neither man nor woman who bears the divine similitude. In the beginning it is only the androgyne . . . who bears it. The differentiation of the sexes is a consequence of the fall of Adam."⁶⁷ Now, in our estrangement we have an unassuageable desire to recover our lost unity. Men are drawn toward the feminine principle in women, and women toward the masculine in men. "It is by means of this femininity that the male-human can once again be integrated to the androgynous source of his nature, just as it is through this masculine principle that the female-human can be . . . integrated to her lost androgynous source. But the reality of these personalities can only be revealed through love. . . . Ultimately it is in God that the lover meets with the beloved, because it is in God that the personality is rooted. And the personality in God, in its original state, is androgynous."⁶⁸

But other theologians are uncomfortable with the notion of androgyny. Derrick Sherwin Bailey, for example, argues that the myth of the androgyne excludes genuine meeting and communication between man and woman. It denies the reality of sexual antithesis and complementation. Its goal is simply an undifferentiated unity, and its motivation is narcissism or self-love.⁶⁹

Bailey is right, of course, that sexual *antithesis* is denied. Indeed, that is the positive vision of androgyny—that the dualism which has undercut the growth of unique persons and which has infected the man-woman relationship with distorted stereotypes be transcended. But Bailey's other charges need answering.

Is androgyny really fueled by narcissism? Does my partner become simply a means for my own healing, a tool used in my own quest for reunification? I believe that the dynamics of pleasure, discussed earlier, provide a clue. There is an element of truth in the charge, but it is not the whole story. Just as I am drawn to my partner sexually not simply out of love but also (and sometimes principally) because of my own sexual desire, so also I am drawn to my partner not only because of the other's unique worth but also (and at times primarily) out of my own incompleteness and need for reunification. But then something happens. The miraculous does occur. Self-love is not erased, for it has positive worth. But self-love

is expanded and transformed by love for the other. The attraction fueled by my incompleteness becomes an expression of love in which the beloved is cherished for her or his own sake.

But does androgyny exclude genuine meeting and communication between a woman and a man? Does it deny complementation? Quite the opposite. Herbert Richardson's interpretation of "psychological bisexuality" speaks to the point.⁷⁰ In his use of the term, *psychological bisexuality* does not mean an individual's genital attraction to members of both sexes. Rather, it means the process by which men and women begin to identify with something in each other. The growth of this possibility can be seen historically. The separation of sex from love in earlier societies—the notion that women and men could not really be genuine friends nor could they converse meaningfully with each other—led to the strong tendency for the two sexes to define themselves as contrary beings. In a modern society where intimate conversation between women and men is possible, there is also the possibility for the person of one sex to identify with the self-feelings of the other by a process of empathetic imagination. "Women become 'masculinely feminine' and men become 'femininely masculine.'" ⁷¹ While male socialization in our society tends to shape men toward the objectification and conquest of women, when empathetic identification occurs the aggressive aspects of sexuality are lessened and the partner is seen as friend and equal. Nothing in the woman's world is totally foreign to the man, and nothing in the man's world alien to the woman. The sexual relationship then can become much more fully integrated into the personhood of the partners. Empathetic identification nurtures the growth of androgyny and with it genuine meeting and communication.

Because of sexist dualism the feminine in men and the masculine in women are suffering. The ancient Greeks knew that their gods Apollo and Dionysus belonged together. Apollo personified the detachment and objectivity which we conventionally call masculine. Dionysus embodied the feminine traits of proximity and union. But the two were equally honored in the high temple at Delphi. The ancients seemed to know that "without Dionysus, Apollo leads to the neglect and abuse of basic human needs, to the destructive manipulation of nature, and to a severe alienation from the earthy,

maternal life-source of our own natures. Dionysus without Apollo leads ultimately to the obliteration of reason and culture."⁷² Psychically, this means that if we neglect the open, receptive, sensitive parts of ourselves we become progressively more rigid, sterile, and compulsively involved in meaningless action. Similarly, if we fear the thrust of energy and the focused goal, our lives become stagnant.⁷³

The social ideology of androgyny is egalitarian. Gayle Graham Yates has perceptively compared it to the two other major ideologies or paradigms present in the Women's Movement.⁷⁴ The feminist paradigm evolved historically from those women who sought the privileges, rights, and opportunities which were valued by men. Its values have been essentially male values. The women's liberationist ideology, on the other hand, is antimasculine. Its insistence is upon separation from men, and its goal is the dominance of women in society and in value formation. The androgynous ideology is different from either. The characteristics and values of neither traditional sex role are assumed superior to the other, either implicitly or explicitly. The goals for change are neither integration of women into a male model, nor segregation with female superiority, but rather pluralism and diversity within the unity of the sexes and of gender values.

Yates' depiction of androgynous sexual expression is illuminating: "Regarding sexuality, the androgynous view transcends and comprehends the feminist and the women's liberationist views. Recognition of the root humanness of sexuality implies that the avenues of its expression should be open alike to women and men, and that the particulars of physiology and the feelings of female and male alike should be authenticated. . . . Sexuality is a wellspring of human nature. It has female and male courses, but the determination of its expression can be made and sanctioned by females and males together. The principles governing sexual choices can be human standards."⁷⁵

Because we are social selves, the increased realization of androgyny in individual lives will have effects throughout society—predictably, augmented justice for women, and quite possibly, a diminution of institutional exploitation and violence. And also because we are social selves, personal change will be facilitated by social

change—alteration of sex role images conveyed by the media, changes in laws, policies, and in the patterns with which various institutions treat the two sexes. Yet, change within the self is not totally dependent upon what happens in the social environment. In a basic sense we do not have to become androgynous, for we essentially are. We simply need to accept the power to become actually what we are essentially—unique individuals, female and male, each with the capacity to be both firm and tender, receiving and giving, rational and intuitive, diffused in awareness and focused in thinking, flexible and strong—like the duet in which two instruments skillfully blend into harmonious oneness.⁷⁶

The image of the duet is significant, for while the harmonious blend is present there are still two instruments playing. Yet, when genuine artistry is present, one is less aware of the separateness and individuality of violinist and pianist than of the beautiful interplay between them. Likewise, the so-called masculine and feminine traits are not dissolved into undifferentiated unity in the self. It is more accurate to speak of the internalization of polarities or the compresence of dualities. This is not a matter of inner dichotomy or polarization or dualism. Psychotherapist June Singer puts it this way: "Androgyny is not trying to manage the relationship between the opposites; it is simply flowing between them. One does not need to ride the rapids, one can *become* the rapids."⁷⁷ And in this process new energy is released.

Moreover, if we accept the fact that essentially we are androgynous, that each of us has a variety of capabilities and psychological tendencies that fall into both of the categories which society calls masculine and feminine, then to ask, "Which of these is predominant in me?" is to ask the wrong question. We might better ask ourselves, "What capacities within me, what gifts that I have been given, are called for in this particular situation?" We can learn to use our varied characteristics appropriately, and to blend our different energies into the best mix for the most creative response to the situation at hand.

Growth in the realization of our androgyny seems to bring with it fresh realization of our unity with other persons and with God. Accepting the polarities within ourselves, we can respond more concretely to other persons as unique individuals. And we can also

sense more vividly the polarities embedded in our experience of the universe and of God. The Sky Father and the Earth Mother are one God. The Transcendent and the Immanent are One.

In living with the polarity of the feminine and the masculine within each of us, in a sense we also live with the New Testament polarity of the present age and the age of fulfillment. In Paul's great vision of the unity of all—"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28)—we encounter the eschatological mystery. But God's gracious possibility is that we can, at least in part and at least in moments of our healing, live prophetically—allowing that eschatological vision to invade and transform our present existence. That is the possibility of realizing the androgyny which is at the essential core of each of us as unique sexual selves.

Our salvation—including our sexual salvation—is incompletely realized. Yet it is real. Because we are not yet whole, the unhealed parts of our sexuality will continue to hurt us and others. But the first and last word of the gospel is grace; grace as forgiveness and acceptance, grace as growth toward fulfillment and empowerment for new life. The Word is made flesh and our flesh is confirmed.

4. Values and Decision-Making

This exercise is designed to focus upon values and their relation to decision-making. The activity requires approximately 30–60 minutes and can be utilized with 5 to 50 participants, alone or in groups.

Procedure

1. Participants are given the incident description, role identities, and instructions provided in Worksheet 4.1.
2. After reading through the introductory material, participants are asked to select the five individuals whom they would place in the hypothetical lifeboat.
3. Groups may be formed with instructions to arrive at a compromise solution with which all group members agree. Or, if small group dynamics are not pertinent to the facilitator's goals, it may be useful to move directly from the selection stage to the facilitated discussion.

Worksheet 4.1

VALUES AND DECISION-MAKING

Consider the Following Problem:

An ocean liner, enroute from Singapore to San Francisco, is destroyed by an explosion. Only twelve people, other than yourself, have managed to reach a lifeboat thrown clear of the blast. The boat is but a transitory haven, however, for it too has been seriously damaged and is leaking badly. Despite feverish bailing and extensive efforts to repair the craft, it is obvious that in a matter of hours it will break apart, sending its passengers to a watery grave. Aboard the boat is an inflatable rubber raft, so small that it will take but five persons. It represents the only chance for escape.

The Captain is the only member of the crew to reach the lifeboat, and he assumes responsibility for the welfare of the other survivors. Although he has decided to go down with the ship, he suggests that the others draw lots to see which five persons will go aboard the rubber raft. Unfortunately, he is over-ruled. In the interests of dispassionate emotions, the twelve have unanimously decided that the Captain choose the five who will be allowed onto the rubber raft.

Which five of the twelve should he select? Explain as fully as you can why he would choose some and not others. A list of the passengers in the lifeboat, together with their personal credentials, follows:

DR. MICHAEL OBERHAUSER ... age 62. A medical doctor with long and selfless service in medicine, specializing in the treatment of cancer. Purportedly on the verge of developing a cure.

REV. ISAAC JOHNSON ... age 33. Black militant minister, a spiritual and political leader of the American Blacks. Although he rejects the use of violence to achieve social parity, he enjoys as strong a following among radicals as he does among moderate Blacks.

He was travelling to San Francisco, where he is scheduled to appear before the court to answer charges of illegally using federal funds to sponsor business ventures in the ghetto.

REGINA FOSDICK ... age 32. Successor to Betty Friedan as spokesperson for the Women's Lib movement. As attractive as Gloria Steinem, as bright and articulate as Kate Millet, she is as admired by women in the Movement as is Johnson by Blacks; her philosophical novel, *The Season of Sex*, has been highly praised by critics.

PRESTON CABOT ... age 43. Cabot is a successful banker from New Rochelle, New York, whose record of service to the community is evidenced by his membership in the Rotary Club, Elks, and Lions. He is chairman of the Jaycees, chairman of the New York Republican Party, and founder of a treatment center for alcoholics.

CLAIRE CABOT ... age 24. Pregnant and third wife of Preston, member of New Rochelle Country Club, and organizer of the Bridge Club for harried housewives. Somewhat frustrated in her role as housewife, she has been fighting the temptation of afternoon martini get-togethers at the club.

HANS KREITZER ... age 72. Born "Fyodor Ivanovich Zukov" in the Ukraine, but moved to Germany while very young. After outstanding achievements at various schools and universities, entered field of nuclear physics. Left Germany in 1933, went to England, and later to the USA, where he is considered to be a leading scientist in the area of atomic energy.

MICHAEL WARD ARMSTRONG III ... age 20. Leader of YAF, a college vigilante committee dedicated to cleansing campuses of liberals. He is a protege of an ex-Senator from New York and has been accepted by the Harvard Law School.

LORENZO FALCO ... age 26. Former star pupil of Connie "the gun" Cafferelli, reputed Godfather of the syndicate. Knows the rackets inside and out. He is to testify before a Senate Subcommittee investigating organized crime. What he knows, if made public, should put a crimp in drug traffic.

SAM CARROWAY ... age 38. Unknown to his fellow passengers, he has been recruited by the CIA for foreign surveillance activities, and is now going back home with vital information concerning Russia's designs in the Far East. For national security reasons, his real identity has been revealed only to the Captain. Otherwise he would have remained an ordinary tourist on board ship.

LUIS ARIENTO ... age 22. Cuban refugee, unofficially regarded as the most promising baseball player in the American League. Like the late Clemente, he thrills millions with his pyrotechnics at bat, on the basepaths, and in the centerfield. He is completing a tour of the USA and the Philippines, urging youngsters to "turn off" drugs.

MIMSY STAR ... age 24. (Formerly Zosia Chmielinski from Chicago.) A sometime hooker and heroin addict (now reformed and rehabilitated) and currently "sex goddess" of film and stage. In a recent article in *Time* the following description was offered: "Her natural blend of earthy substantiality and childlike innocence makes her the first real successor to Marilyn Monroe as that unique kind of starlet that holds both male and female audiences in the palm of her hand... in these times of economic depression and social oppression, Miss Starr has furnished millions with an escape from worldly cares..."

HAROLD GOODMAN ... age 21. Graduated from Yale at age of 20 with a B.A. and M.A. in political science. Current leader and social director of the Youth International Party. His M.A. thesis was entitled "The New Anarchy or Else." It has been acclaimed as a political landmark by the *New York Review of Books* and designated as "must reading" by *National Review*.

Discussion

Which five persons? What characteristics of them? How are they reflected in the text? How reflective of your values are your perceptions of them? What is the impact of values upon relevance for everyday life?

ennobling, is a process which must be experienced more often in the secular world rather than the Christian community. . . . And for most of those numerous gay persons who choose not to come out in the church because they want to *stay* in the church—in Christian community—the church has meant more than just a closet . . . the church has become for them a giant tomb, smelling of death rather than life.”⁶³

Surely there is much research on homosexuality (and on heterosexuality as well) that still needs to be done. But this much is clear: our sexuality is vitally important to the dignity of each of us. The basic issue is really not about “them,” but about all of us. How can we live less fearfully and more securely in the grace of God? What is the nature of that loving humanity toward which the Spirit presses us? And what does it mean to be a woman or a man in Jesus Christ?

9

The Sexually Disenfranchised

EVEN THOUGH SEXUALITY is inescapably part of our being—regardless of physical or mental condition and throughout the life-span—social attitudes often tend to desex certain groups of people. Christian literature on sexual theology and ethics typically ignores this phenomenon, as does the church at large. Perhaps this says something more about our own religious and sexual self-understandings than about the amount of factual information currently available.

Our tendency to treat groups of people as nonsexual is a denigration of personhood and thus a claim on the Christian conscience. Furthermore, it is a vivid illustration of the interaction of the biological and physical with the emotional-cognitive-spiritual dimensions in human sexuality. That our sexuality is not simply a matter of biological drive and capacity but just as importantly a matter of meanings is amply illustrated by four groups of people: the physically disabled, the seriously ill, the aging, and the mentally retarded.

The Physically Disabled

One of the major social myths surrounding the physically handi-

I believe, often does not represent a genuine attempt to understand the range of meanings in homosexual relationships, nor does it do justice to the different social circumstances under which gay women and men must live.)⁵⁷ But when gay persons *do* want to relate their genital expression to life commitment, as many do, "the church in its concern for morality turns away from these moral hungers and concerns."⁵⁸

It is true that the issue of marriage is complicated by the nature of symbolic traditions. As an ordinance or as a sacrament, marriage has a long theological and ecclesiastical history, and that history has been an exclusively heterosexual one. Deeply-rooted symbols are organic. They grow and develop, and sudden changes are seldom successfully legislated. But when existing symbols do not meet legitimate needs, new symbols and rites may be developed. A "Blessing of Union" rite (by whatever name), for example, might function for gays in ways fully parallel to the marriage rites. Such an ordinance would convey the Christian community's recognition, affirmation, pledge of support, and prayer for divine blessing to the gay couple whose intention is lasting fidelity.

Predictably, acceptance of this is a long time off. Heterosexual Christians who want to affirm individual gays but reject all homosexual genital love will argue that since genital expression belongs only in heterosexual marriage, gay Christians have only one legitimate and responsible choice—celibacy. "Just as we expect the heterosexual to be continent outside of marriage, so, too, the homosexual."⁵⁹ But this demonstrates lack of sensitivity to the gay person's socially-imposed dilemma. The heterosexual's abstinence is either freely chosen for a lifetime or it is temporary until marriage. But the celibacy some Christians would impose upon the gay person would be involuntary and unending.⁶⁰

Those others who urge the non-celibate gay to seek a permanent relationship, and yet would withhold any liturgical blessing, are saying something different but also insensitive. By withholding full recognition of such sexual covenants the church only, if unintentionally, promotes promiscuity, for it says in effect, "*Whatever* your relationship is, it is not fit for public Christian affirmation, support, and celebration." To urge a course of action, fully-committed relation-

ships, and then to deny communal and ritual support to those very relationships is to engage in a humanly destructive contradiction.

When and if the church moves toward liturgical support of gay unions, it should also press toward civil recognition. Such legal matters as tax laws, property rights, and inheritance rights are of legitimate concern to a gay couple and, I believe, are a matter of the equity to which love's justice presses us. Moreover, the symbolic affirmation given by the civil community through legal recognition ought not to be minimized.

On the difficult question of whether previously-married gay persons should be allowed to retain custody of their children when they enter into a gay union, the courts have taken a variety of positions. Yet the main difficulty of the question is not principally the matter of whether the children themselves would be shaped into a homosexual orientation. Dr. John Money speaks to the point: "Society's apprehensions notwithstanding, it is not inevitably psychologically dangerous for children, boys or girls, to live with a divorced parent who sets up a new household with a partner of the same sex. . . . It is not the sameness or difference of the sex of the adults that counts, but the quality of the relationship between them, and the quality of the relationship they establish with the child."⁶¹ The real difficulty lies in the fragmenting pressures which the social environment can put upon a same-sex couple, to the detriment of children. For this the church itself must acknowledge its share of responsibility—but it can also respond to the opportunity with its still considerable capacity to influence public opinion on such moral issues.

The ecclesiastical implications of full gay acceptance are doubtless complex, at least in their effective implementation. Understandably, however, many gay Christians are tired of waiting for all of the complexities to be resolved to the full satisfaction of the majority group. These minority Christians have waited—and have hurt—long enough.⁶² Pushed away from the Lord's Table by subtle or blatant pressures, they have been pushed to find community in the gay bars, baths, and ghettos. One gay Christian puts it in these haunting words: "Usually, for most gay women and men, coming out *in* the church has meant coming out *of* the church. . . . Coming out of the closet, a process the church should be enabling and

doctrinal grounds consider a *sin* ought not to be made a *crime* unless that moral judgment can be defended on broader grounds of public welfare and unless the behavior in question constitutes a provable threat to public decency and personal well-being.

What about the internal life of the churches?⁵³ If and when the churches were to affirm homosexuality and its responsible expression as Christianly appropriate, the implications for church life would be many. Full acceptance of gay Christians into the ongoing life of Christian congregations is basic. Because it is still so largely absent, gay movement toward congregations organized by themselves and principally for gays will undoubtedly continue. It is completely understandable, and in the present day it may be necessary. It is also regrettable, for the majority's exclusionism then continues to fragment the body of Christ. It is an irony, indeed, for while the human sciences and contemporary culture at large have been urging the church to take sexuality more seriously, the church in regard to gays and women has made sexuality primary: it has been used as the organizing principle by which these people have been excluded from full participation.⁵⁴

Congregational affirmation of gays would involve significant attitudinal changes on the part of many other members of the church. Full acceptance of gays as persons, for example, means that all of those gestures and behaviors which are appropriate for heterosexuals are also appropriate for gay people.

Effective pastoral counseling and support for gay persons is crucial. By training, profession, and calling the clergy should be those to whom gay people might turn in complete confidence. At present it often is not so. Lack of sufficient information, lack of insight into the problems which gays confront in a hostile environment, and lack of some deep understanding and acceptance concerning their own sexuality remain formidable problems with many clergy. And this constitutes an important agenda item for theological education.

The church's ministry is to the gay community as well as to gay individuals. While full integration into the richly diverse body of Christ is the ideal, there is also need for supportive gay Christian groups now and in the foreseeable future. A study of male gays in the United States and two European countries points this out: "Perhaps our most salient finding pertains to the beneficial effects

(in terms of psychological adjustment) of a supportive environment—social relations with other homosexuals, their own institutions and publications."⁵⁵ From gay coffee houses in local churches to denominationally-supported gay caucuses, these things are needed. That gay bars and baths are still virtually the only institutionalized meeting places in many urban areas should make a claim upon the church's conscience.

The ordination question continues to be difficult. Not only division over theological and ethical issues but also differing patterns of ministerial placement and job security cause reservations for otherwise sympathetic church leaders. While there are undoubtedly ordained homosexually-oriented ministers right now in every denomination, the vast majority of them quite understandably continue their secrecy. It was not until 1972 that a major American denomination, the United Church of Christ, ordained a publicly-avowed gay candidate, and the second instance took another four years, this time an Episcopalian event. There will be others, but the process is painful and painfully slow. The recommendation made by the United Church's Executive Council to its ordaining bodies is worthy of consideration by other denominations: "that in the instance of considering a stated homosexual candidacy for ordination, the issue should not be his/her homosexuality as such, but rather the candidate's total view of human sexuality and his/her understanding of the morality of its use."⁵⁶ Though presently this may be difficult to implement in some denominational situations, it is the logic of full acceptance. Church assemblies may continue to claim "prudential grounds" as their main reason for barring gay ordinations for some time to come, but one day perhaps that form of prudence will sound as thin as when it was used to bar women and racial minorities from ministry.

Most difficult of all for the church at present is the idea of "homosexual marriage." Heterosexuals of the "rejecting-punitive" and "rejecting-nonpunitive" persuasions, of course, are adamantly opposed to any such thing. But in the "qualified acceptance" position there is a curious ambivalence. On the one hand, there is an insistence that the non-celibate gay person have a genitally-exclusive permanent relationship; homosexual relationships are tolerated only insofar as they approximate heterosexual monogamy. (This insistence,

In spite of the lack of any demonstrable connection between male homosexual orientation and "effeminate" behavior patterns, the gay male seems particularly threatening to many other men. He seems to belie the importance of super-masculinity, and his very presence seems to call into question so much that many other men have sacrificed to be "manly." But many heterosexual women likewise have difficulty coping with the lesbian. The lesbian is independent from male control in ways that other women are not, and when a heterosexual woman has deeply internalized sexist dualism such independence becomes a considerable threat. Furthermore, both men and women of heterosexual orientation can feel diminished by the presence of a gay person of the opposite sex. Consciously or unconsciously there is awareness that the gay person has no specifically sexual interest in them. To the extent that sexual attractiveness is vital to one's sense of basic self-worth, this, too, is threatening.

There are additional ways in which gay people raise the anxieties of many heterosexuals. Because of their sexual orientation, gay folk appear to disvalue commonly-held values concerning marriage, family, and children. And because we so frequently judge others using our own standards as the ultimate and unquestionable norm, those who so obviously deviate from our experience seem to be seriously deviant indeed. Curiously enough, gay people can also awaken in others a dimly-recognized fear of death. Sometimes the hope of vicarious immortality through children and grandchildren is, in fact, stronger than the resurrection faith for many Christians. If so, the presence of the gay person who (usually) does not have children can awaken the fear of death, even though consciousness of that might be only a nameless anxiety.⁴⁸

At its root, the issue goes beyond the insights of the psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists, valuable though those insights be. It is finally a theological matter, an issue of faith. If we must find an important part of our personal security in a status which depends upon the negative definition of those who differ from us—and if we must find the security of our social order through rigid demarcations of behaviors regardless of their causation, their motivations, their moral intent, or their actual consequences—then we are living by something other than the grace of God.

On the other hand, through that very grace we might know something of the healing possibilities for the sexual dualisms that beset us. To that extent we will not need to project our own alienation onto others but can join with them in our common liberation. It will be liberation from a hierarchical and intensely power-conscious attitude toward life. It will be liberation from the need to organize the proper membership of both church and society around a principle of sex orientation. It will be liberation from the need to blame a minority group for the erosion of all of "our" values. But more, it can be a liberation into greater equality, more sensitive abilities to care about persons, augmented justice, in short, a freedom to love more fully—others and also ourselves.⁴⁹

Implications for the Church

The church's unequivocal support of civil rights for gay people ought not depend upon Christian agreement about the theological and moral appropriateness of homosexuality. The matter of civil rights is a matter of basic Christian commitment to social justice for all persons.⁵⁰

The present legal situation is highly uneven. A few states and municipalities have legislated civil protection for gays, prohibiting discrimination in employment, public accommodations, housing, and licensing on the basis of "affectional or sexual preference." But the majority have not, nor has the federal government. And the passage of such legislation is no guarantee that it will not be rescinded.⁵¹

Most states still have punitive legislation concerning gay people on their books, though in actual practice enforcement is varied and unpredictable.⁵² In any event, laws labeling "sodomy" or "unnatural sexual intercourse" as punishable offenses have a number of inherent problems. They violate the rights of privacy. They are ineffective and virtually unenforceable except through objectionable police methods such as entrapment and enticement. Yet, whether they are enforced or not, sodomy laws stigmatize as criminal the person whose only "crime" is preference for the same sex, and inevitably such laws will take their toll in the gay person's sense of self-worth. Moreover, an important principle of church-state separation may be involved. What some Christians on fairly narrow

afflicts us all in various ways. Feeling the internally divisive affects of spiritualism, we yearn (unconsciously as well as consciously) to be whole, to reclaim the essential unity of the body-self. But since majority stereotype insists that gays are more sexually defined and simply *more sexual* than the rest, they may well become the targets of subconscious envy precisely for that reason. Thus, the stereotype bears its curious and unintended harvest, but one which roots it even more firmly in the feelings of many who hold it.

The problem of patriarchal or sexist dualism may be even more basic to anti-gay feeling. This might be experienced in several related ways. One is the heterosexual's possible anxiety about homosexual feelings within the self. While for the sake of economy I have been using "gay" and "heterosexual" in ways that might suggest two sharply distinct and mutually exclusive groups, current research indicates that people commonly tend toward some degree of bisexuality. Most, for reasons not yet fully understood, develop a dominant orientation toward one side or the other. Kinsey's early hypothesis, however, has been repeatedly confirmed by subsequent research: on the scale of zero to six, relatively few persons fall near the zero end (exclusively heterosexual in both feelings and behavior) and relatively few near the six mark (exclusively homosexual). Most are somewhere in between, though with a clearly felt and expressed bias toward one orientation rather than the other.

A recent study draws this conclusion: "Although we suspect that approximately four or five percent of American males—and half of that percentage of females—are exclusively homosexual in their behaviors throughout their lives, much larger numbers are exclusively homosexual in their behaviors at any given time, and even larger numbers engage in both homosexual and heterosexual acts from time to time. For a given individual, ratings on this homosexual-heterosexual continuum may go up or down depending upon the person's age, life circumstances, and the culture in which he or she lives."⁴³ Further, there is not necessarily a perfect fit between one's feelings and one's behaviors regarding sexual orientation.

Even for those whose genital expression beyond puberty has been exclusively heterosexual, there may be homosexual feelings present even if relegated to the unconscious level. Freud's notion of reaction formation becomes pertinent at this point: one way of

coping with unwanted impulses felt in the self is by attacking it in others.⁴⁴

Because of patriarchalism and exaggerated images of masculinity, such anxiety is frequently felt more strongly by men—an additional reason why male gays have consistently been more the objects of negative majority feeling than have lesbians. It seems highly probable that the much more severe condemnation of male homosexual acts in the Old Testament expresses this patriarchal phenomenon: "If a man lies with a male *as with a woman*, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them" (Leviticus 20:13, italics added). If male dignity was a primary consideration, then "sodomy" could not be tolerated, because when a man acted sexually like a woman he was committing a *degradation*—literally, a loss of grade or status—not only in regard to himself but also, by implication, for every other male. But this is not true of the early Hebrews alone. Anthropologists have noted the strong tendency of patriarchal cultures, wherever they may be, to view (especially male) homosexuality as "the unspeakable sin," while matriarchal cultures have been strikingly different on this issue.⁴⁵

A male is supposed to feel masculine in any patriarchy. A psychiatrist comments, "I believe that homosexuality is also abhorred by men because it is felt by them to represent confused, poorly defined and poorly delineated boundaries of what constitutes so-called normal male feelings. Homosexuality, the word and the symbol, threatens masculine gender identity, and identity generally, because it is felt as potential eradication of safe limits and borders within whose confines we can rest easy and sure of what and who we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to feel."⁴⁶ Pollution rituals as studied by anthropologists (see Chapter 2) provide added insight. Those rituals and punishments, in both ancient tribes and modern societies, tend to focus upon the marginal person who does not clearly represent society's patterns and symbols of order. Such persons may be doing nothing morally wrong, yet their status is indefinable. But this places them very basically "in the wrong" for they have "developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone."⁴⁷

of that gospel to which they were sincerely committed. We ought neither blame them nor pretend that we have the full truth. Our judgments—whatever they may be—are conditioned and imperfect. But we do have some insights about homosexuality now that they did not have access to, and it would be unfaithful not to use the best lights that we have.³⁸

We have little definitive knowledge about the causes of homosexuality, however—or of heterosexuality, for that matter.³⁹ We do know that homosexuality is extraordinarily difficult to define as a coherent phenomenon, simply because gay people like heterosexuals are diverse and unique. They differ in behavior and feelings, in levels of sexual interest, in roles and ways of lovemaking, in the amount of genital activity, in attitudes about their own and others' homosexuality, in the extent to which they are open or covert about their orientation. This conclusion from the Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University bears emphasis: "Our data appear to indicate that homosexuality involves a large number of widely divergent experiences—developmental, sexual, social, and psychological—and that even after a person has been labeled 'homosexual' on the basis of his or her preferred sexual object choice, there is little that can be predicted about the person on the basis of that label."⁴⁰ One thing, I would add, can be predicted, however, precisely because it is common to all human beings: gay persons desire and seek meaning and wholeness in and through their sexuality, and their sexuality is for them (as for anyone else) of intrinsic importance to their capacity for any kind of human love.

This chapter's emphasis thus far has been upon one of the two directions appropriate to sexual theology: the movement from Christian faith to sexuality. But we need also to make inquiry in the other direction as well, asking how our own experience as sexual persons tends to give shape to our perceptions of the faith and its moral values. In doing so we can understand more fully something of the persisting power of anti-gay stereotypes as well as the intensity of feeling about this whole issue.

Some of the anti-homosexual emotion might stem from the repugnance some people feel about the physical acts of gay sexual expression. It is well to recall just what they are. The chief expressions are hand-holding, kissing, mutual caressing, and mutual

masturbation (for both sexes); cunnilingus (for women); and fellatio and anal intercourse (for men). The point is that all of these physical techniques are the property of heterosexuals as well, some statistically more common than others but all widely used. It is unlikely that the foreignness of the physical act to heterosexual experience explains very much.

It may be that heterosexuals feel less personally defined by their sexual orientation and that the apparent centrality of homosexuality to the gay's personal identity is disturbing. But, to the extent that this is true, it is more effect than cause of discrimination—just as racial minority people are typically more conscious of their own skin color, through countless daily reminders from the majority. It seems, on the whole, more accurate to say that heterosexuals simply tend to be preoccupied with the narrowly sexual aspect of the gay person's life, in spite of the fact that gays "vary profoundly in the degree to which their homosexual commitment and its facilitation become the organizing principle of their lives."⁴¹

For this reason language becomes highly significant. The term "homosexual" is clinically correct if it refers simply to the fact that an individual's primary affectional and genital orientation is toward the same sex. Thus, to speak of "homosexuality" meaning a psychosexual orientation or to speak of "homosexual acts" where the reference is specifically to genital and other physical expression is quite accurate. But unfortunately the word carries other associations for many—especially that of clinical pathology and a focus on sexual acts *per se* rather than on human beings. Thus, gays are entirely appropriate in their insistence that *persons* who have this alternative form of sexual orientation be called gay. It is a way of saying more comprehensively and more accurately that one's identity as a sexual human being is far broader than what one does in bed. It is a way of resisting the corrosive effect of having to deal with one's own self-image so constantly in genital terms, in spite of the majority's desire to keep the focus there.⁴²

To press the causes of anti-gay feeling more fully, we need to reflect once more on the two alienating sexual dualisms. Consider spiritualistic dualism. By the strange twist of heterosexual emotional-logic, it would appear that gays are resented because they seem to have succumbed less to the spirit-body dualism which

the Catholic side, in 1976 Fr. John McNeill published his impressive case for gay acceptance, *The Church and the Homosexual*. Among other issues, emphasizing the positive contributions which homosexual acceptance can make to church and society, he contends, "The objective acceptance of the homosexual community will potentially leave both communities (homosexual and heterosexual) free from the need to conform to narrow stereotypes, and positively free to develop all the qualities that belong to the fullness of the human personality."³⁵

Among theologians it has been Norman Pittenger, however, who has articulated the full acceptance position most persistently over the years.³⁶ God, he affirms, is the "Cosmic Lover," ceaselessly and unfaithfully in action as love, and manifested supremely in Jesus Christ. God's abiding purpose for humankind is that in response to divine action we should realize our intended humanity as human lovers—in the richest, broadest, and most responsible sense of the term. Our embodied sexuality is the physiological and psychological base for our capacity to love.

For all of its continuity with animal sexuality, human sexuality is different, continues Pittenger. As persons our sexuality means the possibility of expressing and sharing a total personal relationship in love, a relationship which contributes immeasurably toward our intended destiny. Hence, abnormality or deviance should not be defined statistically, but rather in reference to the norm of humanity in Jesus Christ. Gay persons desire and need deep and lasting relationships just as do heterosexuals, and appropriate genital expression should be denied to neither.

Thus, the ethical question which Pittenger poses is this: what sexual behavior will serve and enhance, rather than inhibit, damage, or destroy the fuller realization of our divinely-intended humanity? The answer is sexual behavior in accord with an ethics of love. This means commitment and trust, tenderness, respect for the other, and the desire for ongoing and responsible communion with the other. On the negative side, an ethics of love mandates against selfish sexual expression, cruelty, impersonal sex, obsession with sex, and against actions done without willingness to take responsibility for the consequences. Such an ethics always asks about the meanings of acts in their total context—in the relationship itself, in society,

and in regard to God's intended direction for human life. Such an ethics of sexual love is equally appropriate to heterosexual and gay Christians. There is no double standard.

Further Reflections

Reinhold Niebuhr argued that Christians must learn to live with the tension of "having and not having the truth."³⁷ "Tolerance" in its truest sense, he maintained, comes when we can have vital convictions which lead to committed actions and, at the same time, recognize that our own "truth" is always incomplete and subject to distortion. Living with convictions we also then live within the reality of divine forgiveness and with respect for the convictions of those who sincerely differ from us. That spirit is always essential, I believe, but when we confront issues like homosexuality on which feelings are particularly deep and divided, it is especially crucial.

At various times I have felt the force of each of the first three stances which I have described, beginning as a teenager with the full complement of anti-gay stereotypes and prejudices. Having moved somewhat later into the rejecting-non-punitive and then the qualified acceptance positions, several personal friendships with remarkable gay Christian people jarred me into further reflection. I came to believe that nothing less than full Christian acceptance of homosexuality and of its responsible genital expression adequately represented the direction of both gospel and contemporary research. While full acceptance means a rather sharp turning from the majority opinion in the Christian *moral* tradition about homosexuality, I am convinced that it does not mean an *ethical* change from the central thrust of the gospel. Rather, it means its fuller implementation.

There are times when we must challenge specific moral traditions of our heritage in the light of new empirical knowledge, new experience, and God's on-going revelation. Our ancestors-in-faith did not know what we now know about homosexuality as a psychosexual orientation, nor can we blame them for being persons of their own historical time. And the dependence of early Christians on certain cultural traditions prevented them (on this issue as on some other moral matters) from seeing some of the implications

as persons. Further comment on this is warranted, but I shall do so in the context of the next position.

Qualified acceptance might be the term for a third theological option regarding homosexuality. Helmut Thielicke is its best example, and his argument follows several steps. Similar to Barth, Thielicke first argues, "The fundamental order of creation and the created determination of the two sexes make it appear justifiable to speak of homosexuality as a 'perversion' . . . [which] is in every case *not* in accord with the order of creation."³² But Thielicke is more open to contemporary psychological and medical research on the subject. Hence, he takes a second step: "But now experience shows that constitutional homosexuality at any rate is largely unsusceptible to medical or psychotherapeutic treatment, at least so far as achieving the desired goal of a fundamental conversion to normality is concerned."³³ Further, he says, homosexuality as a *predisposition* ought not to be depreciated any more than the varied distortions of the created order in which all fallen people share.

But what about genital expression? If a gay person can change in sexual orientation, such change should actively be sought. Admittedly, however, most cannot. Then, Thielicke contends, such persons should seek to sublimate their homosexual desires and not act on them. But some constitutional homosexuals "because of their vitality" are not able to practice abstinence. If that is the case, they should structure their sexual relationships "in an ethically responsible way" (in adult, fully-committed relationships). They should make the best of their painful situations without idealizing them or pretending that they are normal.

Thielicke's argument is important. For one thing, it is more empirically informed than the rejecting-nonpunitive position. Further, this argument now represents the position of a number of church leaders and several recent denominational statements on the issue. But the argument still is unacceptable, in my judgment. This position, like Barth's, is grounded in an essentially nonhistoricist, rigid version of natural law. And, in spite of its greater humanness, the position becomes self-contradictory. In effect, the gay person is told, "We heterosexual Christians sympathize with your plight,

and if you *must* give genital expression to your orientation you must do it in a morally responsible way—but do not forget that you are a sinner *because of your sexual orientation* and do not deny that you are a sexual pervert."

An ethics of the gospel ought never forget that the capacity for moral responsibility is intrinsically related to self-acceptance which, in turn, depends on one's acceptance by others and, ultimately, by God. Gay persons frequently have been told by their families that they do not belong to them, by the church that they are desperate sinners because of their affectional orientation, by medical doctors that they are sick, and by the law that they are criminals. In the face of this onslaught, it is amazing that so many are emotionally stable and sexually responsible. If loneliness, self-doubt, depression, and promiscuity do have a higher incidence among gays, it is fully understandable. Then we should cut through the vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy and strike at the root of the problem—social oppression. Thielicke fails to do this. More liberal though his position might be, by continuing to label same-sex orientation as a perversion of God's natural law, he encourages the continuation of punitive attitudes toward gays. If it be argued that we can reject the sin without rejecting the sinner, the question must be asked, but what if the so-called "sin" is as much a part of the person as the color of the skin? The upshot of it all is that Thielicke's position effectively undermines its own hopes for responsible and faithful sexual relationships.

The fourth major theological possibility is full acceptance. Those who affirm this position most often make the assumption that the homosexual orientation is more of a given than a free choice. More fundamentally, however, this position rests on the conviction that same-sex relationships can richly express and be the vehicle of God's humanizing intentions.

Though still in a minority, the advocates of full acceptance are increasing in number. In 1963 the English Friends stated in their widely-read *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*, "One should no more deplore 'homosexuality' than left-handedness. . . . Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and therefore we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse."³⁴ From

patients without recognizing or admitting that their heterosexual patients *also* have personality problems—and that is why they have come for therapy. The best comparative study to date remains that of Evelyn Hooker who found that when batteries of personality tests were administered to samples of male heterosexuals and male gays, neither group of which was in therapy, the clinical psychologists evaluating the test results could neither distinguish sexual orientation nor find “demonstrable pathology” among those later identified as homosexually-oriented.²⁷ “Neurotic” traits typically ascribed to gay persons are essentially the same for members of any oppressed minority group, and in cultures where homosexual behavior has been fully accepted such traits do not discernibly appear.²⁸

Harmful consequences for the institution of family life is another fear expressed in this position. Even if gay persons were no less prone to emotional instability because of their sexual orientation, if society endorses same-sex coupling what will happen to the concept of the Christian family? Thus, Muehl asks, “Can the battered institution of Christian marriage stand the sight of gay unions being solemnized at the altar?”²⁹

It is likely, however, that gay acceptance would actually bring constructive family consequences. There are several reasons for this. At present a fair number of marital difficulties and divorces stem from the fact that one of the spouses is primarily homosexual in orientation and has been pushed into marriage by social expectations and by the desire to escape detection. One priest who serves as a canon lawyer in a Catholic marriage tribunal contends that in over a third of the divorces with which he has dealt, one of the partners was homosexually inclined, a fact of major disruption for the marriage.³⁰ It seems highly probable in this regard that marital stability would be well served if heterosexual union were not viewed as the only avenue to respectability.

Other beneficial results for family life can be foreseen as well. Greater acceptance of homosexuality is likely to ease the current pressures toward the heterosexual's living up to rigid sex-role stereotypes. The acting out of such stereotypes when they are not authentic to one's unique personality is predictably a major factor in marital difficulties. Moreover, emotional intimacy between heterosexual family members of the same gender is likely to be enhanced. Such

intimacy—between father and son, for example—too often is still inhibited by unrecognized homosexual fears. And, of no minor importance, the syndromes of alienation and rejection within families when a child is discovered to be gay would be ameliorated. Speaking to this point, Peggy Way writes out of an extensive counseling experience with gay people and their families: “I feel terrible sadness and pathos over the beautiful ‘children’ many parents are missing because sexuality gets in the way. All the rich humanness, spirituality, commitment, kindness I get to enjoy and share is lost to parents who cannot deal with the homosexuality of their own children, regardless of their other fine qualities.”³¹ In short, the picture of invidious consequences to family life from gay acceptance is highly overdrawn. In fact, the greater likelihood is quite the other way around: there are positive benefits to be foreseen.

Positive benefits more than negative consequences can also be foreseen for society as a whole. Societal health is always integrally related to social justice, and justice is served when discrimination against minority groups on the basis of unfair stereotypes is mitigated. Justice is also served when violence and the more destructive forms of competition are mitigated, and our attempt to understand the exaggerated aggressiveness of many male heterosexuals must take seriously the presence of conscious and unconscious fears of homosexuality. In a difficult-to-measure but predictable way, society would also benefit from the creative energies released in countless gay people, were they to be fully accepted. At present, closeted gays time and again report the daily energy drain inevitable for one forced to live a double life. If of a different sort, the drain on the personal resources of publicly-avowed gays is surely no less. Society presses them to make their homosexual orientation central to their identities, coerces them into spending time and energy defending their acceptability, and then through its various door-closing discriminations deprives itself of their best talents. Once again, not only is the case for harmful social consequences difficult to demonstrate, but the more persuasive arguments lie on the side of social benefit.

There is a basic flaw which underlies the entire rejecting-non-punitive position: the assumption that it is possible to reject the homosexual orientation as such and still be nonpunitive toward gays

which are each partial expressions of some larger whole. Such a view can allow neither men nor women to be whole persons who can develop both their active and their affective sides."²¹

Still another contention of Barth's position is that homosexuality means a "despising" of the other sex. But this lacks both logical and factual foundation. It equates an aversion to intercourse with an aversion to persons. Actually, many gay people exhibit the ability to establish particularly meaningful and loving relationships with members of the opposite sex precisely because sexual "conquest" in whatever form is excluded from the situation. Moreover, current research indicates the widespread amount of antipathy between persons of the *opposite* sex because of the dominance-submission patterns engrained in our sex-role stereotyping.²² Indeed, the logic of Barth's argument would seem to be that *heterosexuals* by their very nature should despise members of their own sex—an unsupportable assumption.

And finally, Barth maintains that homosexuality is idolatrous because it is basically self-worship and narcissism: the gay person is just loving in the other the reflection of the self. But this claim does grave injustice to both the uniqueness of persons and the capacities which gay people amply demonstrate for self-giving love. When a person in a committed relationship deeply loves another of the same sex, it is difficult to understand how this can be construed as self-love—except if one adopts an untenable "biologism" about human relatedness and ignores the unity of the body-self.

We return to Muehl to examine the second major argument of the rejecting-nonpunitive position; that undesirable social consequences most likely would result from homosexuality's acceptance. Underneath Muehl's fears for the future of the family seems to lie the unspoken conviction that the church's approval of same-sex orientation would bring in its wake a significant increase in numbers of those choosing to be gay. But this is highly unlikely. Research shows no demonstrable increase in homosexual behavior in the quarter century since Kinsey's study in spite of some lessening of punitive attitudes in recent years.²³ Indeed, if one's dominant sexual orientation is, for the great majority, not a matter of conscious choice, this is quite understandable. It may be the case that some heterosexual people, perhaps quite unconsciously, assume

that there is something so attractive in the gay experience that if it were not stringently forbidden many others would choose this orientation.

The great majority of gay persons do not appear to have any more choice about their affectional orientation than do the great majority of heterosexuals. There is no general agreement about the causes of homosexuality. Major theories cluster around two different approaches, the psychogenic and the genetic, but both remain in dispute.²⁴ Some researchers are now admitting that when we know more about the causes of heterosexuality (about which we know precious little at present) then we shall also know more about the causes of homosexuality. At least one thing is increasingly clear, however: sexual orientation is relatively fixed by early childhood through processes about which the individual makes no conscious choice.

If sexual orientation for the great majority of heterosexuals and gay persons is not freely chosen, neither is it easily reversed. Positive therapeutic results in that minority of gay people who have sought treatment to reverse their orientation have been minimal. One study contends that there are actually no validated instances of successful sexual preference reorientation through therapy.²⁵ Behavioral modification programs using "aversive therapy" have been able to condition some gays against attraction to their own sex but have been notably unable to replace that with similar attraction to the opposite sex. In 1975 the therapist who had developed and popularized the orgasmic reorientation technique disavowed his own treatment and called upon other behavioral therapists to cease, because such attempts were proving harmful to the subjects' whole personality structures—a particularly dehumanizing result.²⁶

The adverse social consequences argument also hinges upon the assumption that gay people are inherently less capable of interpersonal and social functioning than are heterosexuals. It is significant, however, that in 1974 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, saying "homosexuality *per se* implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities." Those clinicians who have attributed personality problems to gays *because* of their sexual orientation usually have drawn their observations from their own

cal, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay."¹⁷ Moreover, this is idolatry. One who seeks same-sex union is simply seeking oneself in a quest for self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency. Hence, homosexuality is unnatural and violates the command of the Creator. But, Barth hastens to add, the central theme of the gospel is God's overwhelming grace in Jesus Christ. *Homosexuality* must be condemned, but in light of grace the homosexual *person* must not.

If Barth's arguments emphasize that there is something inherently wrong with the homosexual condition as such (it is idolatrous, a sickness and a perversion), the rejecting-nonpunitive position can also be argued on more consequentialist grounds. William Muehl does this.¹⁸ Muehl clearly recognizes the cruelty, injustice, and hypocrisy all present in the persecution and prosecution of gay persons. He fully supports the church's obligation toward their civil liberties. Theirs, he believes, is not the only form of sexual irresponsibility, but it is irresponsibility which cannot be approved by Christian conscience. Human dignity is threatened by gay relationships. Homosexuality is an illness comparable to alcoholism, and sheer acceptance of it would have "implications for our view of marriage, the limitations appropriate to sexual activity, the raising of children, and the structure of the family." Since we are relatively ignorant concerning such potentially grave social results, Muehl argues, we should respect the historic position of the church, which rejects homosexuality.

The rejecting-nonpunitive stance appears to rest upon two major arguments and upon two major unspoken assumptions, each of which is open to serious question. The first argument is that of natural law and idolatry. At this point we return to Barth. Barth seems to forget our human historicity, apparently assuming that human nature is an unchangeable, once-and-for-all essence given by the Creator. Actually, our human nature is shaped in some significant part by the interaction of people in specific periods of time with specific cultural symbols and historic environments. In fact, the notion of a fixed human nature is highly questionable from a biblical point of view. "Where we read 'created' in our Bibles, the tense in the Hebrew is often in fact the continuous present, i.e. God is 'creating.' And from this understanding comes a statement

that may be held to give us our vocation as 'being created in the image of God'. . . ." ¹⁹

Committed to human historicity, Gregory Baum fittingly declares, "In other words, human nature as it is at present is not normative for theologians. . . . What is normative for normal life is the human nature to which we are divinely summoned, which is defined in terms of mutuality. This, at least, is the promise of biblical religion." After examining the evidence of mutual fulfillment in committed gay couples, Fr. Baum concludes, "Homosexual love, then, is not contrary to human nature, defined in terms of mutuality toward which mankind is summoned."²⁰

In addition, Barth's claim that homosexuality is idolatrous rests on questionable assumptions which I have earlier touched upon—the norm of procreative sex and the notion of essential gender complementarity. Regarding the first, Barth (like Paul Ramsey) affirms responsible family planning, but contends that even if every sex act is not procreative, all sexual relations must be oriented to that possibility. On one level it can be countered that while responsible *love* and sexual expression ought not to be sundered, procreation (even the procreative possibility) and sex ought not to be irrevocably joined. "Be fruitful and multiply" has now overfilled the earth. On another level it can also be argued that the possibility of procreation has not consistently been insisted upon by Christian orthodoxy, as witness the validity of the marriage between a man and a woman, one of whom is known to be irreversibly sterile.

What of the notion of essential gender complementarity? Barth claims that there is no "fellow humanity" apart from the covenanted relationship with one of the opposite sex. But it is more theologically defensible to affirm that there is no genuine humanity apart from *relationship* and *community*. To insist that the relationship which constitutes the image of God must be heterosexual assumes that the psychic natures of women and men are somehow biologically-given and ontologically unchangeable. Rosemary Ruether speaks vigorously to this point: "Such a concept of complementarity depends on a sadomasochistic concept of male and female relations. It covertly demands the continued dependency and underdevelopment of woman in order to validate the thesis that two kinds of personalities exist by nature in males and females and

ment, his abhorrence of idolatry, and his conviction that we are all sinners saved by grace through faith."¹³

Paul's other reference to homosexual acts (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) is similar to that of the writer of 1 Timothy (1:8-11). Both passages contain lists of practices which will exclude people from the kingdom. They are acts which dishonor God and harm the neighbor, including such things as thievery, drunkenness, kidnapping, and lying. Homosexual acts are not singled out for special censure, but they are unmistakably part of the list. What then should we make of Paul's moral judgment in this case? Perhaps we should just accept him for what he was: a faithful apostle and a profound interpreter of the central message of the gospel, yet one who was also a fallible and historically-conditioned human being. Paul's central message is clear: we do not earn righteousness by anything we do nor are we justified by anything we are—we are justified by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and the gifts of the Spirit are equally available to all persons. If the norm of the new humanity in Jesus Christ together with our best current moral wisdom and empirical knowledge would cause us to question some of Paul's moral convictions about the status of women and about the institution of human slavery, surely his moral judgments about homosexual acts ought not be exempt.

The central biblical message regarding sexuality seems clear enough. Like every other good gift, it can be misused. The idolatrous dishonoring of God inevitably results in the dishonoring of persons, and faithfulness to God will result in sexual expression which honors the personhood of the other. Our sexuality is not a mysterious and alien force of nature but part of what it means to be human. It is a power to be integrated fully into one's selfhood and to be used in the service of love. That message, I am convinced, applies regardless of one's affectional orientation.

The Range of Contemporary Theological Opinion

Four theological stances toward homosexuality represent the range of current conviction.¹⁴ The first can be called a rejecting-punitive orientation. The person who holds this unconditionally rejects homosexuality as Christianly legitimate and, at the same time, bears a punitive attitude toward gay persons.

The rejecting-punitive motif, tragically enough, is a strong one in Christian history. If we have been ignorant of the persecutions, it is not without reason. Unlike the recognized histories of other minority groups, there has been no "gay history." Heterosexual historians usually have considered the subject unmentionable, and gay historians have been constrained by the fear of ceasing to be invisible. A conspiracy of silence has resulted. Yet, the facts are there. For many centuries stoning, burning, sexual mutilation, and the death penalty were fairly common treatments for discovered homosexuals. While the church frequently gave its blessings to the civil persecutions, official ecclesiastical practice tended to be less physically violent. Nevertheless, spiritually it was even more severe, for it usually meant refusal of the sacraments and ostracism from the common life.¹⁵

Today no major contemporary theologian holds the rejecting-punitive position and most church bodies in their formal statements have moved away from it. Yet in practice it may still be by far the most common orientation throughout the length and breadth of the church in our society. Its theology rests on a selective biblical literalism—selective, again, because other moral issues are not treated with the same kind of literalism at all. Its punitive attitudes might be expressed less violently than was typical in the past, but they are still highly punitive and ostracizing.¹⁶ The attitudes are rooted in familiar stereotypes: all lesbians are tough and all male gays effeminate; homosexuals are compulsive and sex-hungry; they are by nature promiscuous; male gays have an inherent tendency toward child molestation. Each of these stereotypes has been thoroughly discounted by reliable research, and yet they persist in the minds of countless Christians. And the key criticism of this whole orientation—beyond its untenable biblical interpretations—must be the incongruity of a vindictive stance with the gospel.

The *rejecting-nonpunitive* position must be considered more fully. No less a theologian than Karl Barth represents this view. Since humanity is always "fellow-humanity," Barth argues, men and women come into its fullness only in relation to persons of the opposite sex. To seek one's humanity in a person of the same sex is to seek "a substitute for the despised partner," and this is "physi-

be described as a bond of deep love. There is no indication that there was genital expression in either of these. The point is simply that in these instances, deeply and emotionally expressed love between two persons of the same sex is affirmed. Indeed, the accounts suggest that it is something of a cause for celebration.

In the New Testament we have no record of any words of Jesus about homosexuality either as an orientation or as a genital expression. The major New Testament references are found in two Pauline letters and in 1 Timothy.

Paul's statement in Romans 1:18-32 traditionally has been taken as the strongest New Testament rejection of homosexuality, yet this passage deserves more careful examination that is often accorded to it. The writer is clearly concerned about the influence of paganism on the Roman Christians, and he had good reason to be. The moral climate of Hellenistic Rome was marred by various forms of sexual commerce and exploitation. Yet, in this passage while Paul sees homosexual acts as a *result* of idolatry, he does not claim that they are the *cause* of divine wrath. Idolatry clearly is the major issue at stake. Further, when Paul uses the word "nature" he "apparently refers only to homosexual acts indulged in by those he considered to be otherwise heterosexually inclined; acts which represent a voluntary choice to act contrary to their ordinary sexual appetite."¹¹ Thus, he speaks of homosexual acts as those in which people are "leaving," "giving up," or "exchanging" their regular sexual orientations. It is difficult to read into Paul's words at this point the modern psychosexual understanding of the gay person as one whose orientation is fixed very early in life and for whom "natural" (heterosexual) relations would be felt as basically contrary to his or her own sexual constitution, and might well be impossible at that. In addition, in this passage we are given a description of homosexual *lust* ("consumed with passion for one another"), but hardly an account of interpersonal same-sex love—about which Paul does not speak.

Thus, it is difficult to construe Paul's statement as applicable to acts of committed love engaged in by persons for whom same-sex attraction is part of the givenness of *their* "nature." In point of fact, Paul uses the word "nature" in his writings as a flexible concept, expressing varying concerns in different contexts. An ethical position

which condemns homosexuality as a violation of natural law will have to turn to non-biblical philosophical materials for its justification—the Pauline material will not sustain it.¹²

Finally it is worth noting that in this entire section of the letter to the Romans the author's concern is to demonstrate that all persons are under the power of sin. They cannot extricate themselves from it through meritorious works of the law. In spite of his own moral judgments, Paul reveals this basic point in Romans 2:1. There he declares that those who pass judgment on others (for the various acts which he has earlier mentioned) are no better off. They condemn themselves because they stand under the same power of sin. And in Romans 3:21-25 comes the central premise of these first chapters of the letter: all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and all who open themselves in faith are justified by God's grace in Jesus Christ.

The point of all this is not that Paul sees homosexual acts as neutral or, much less, that he looks upon any such acts with favor. Clearly, he does not. He understands homosexual practices to be the result of idolatry. But, as David L. Bartlett has observed, Paul's argument here is not "purely" theological. It is partly based on his interpretation of Old Testament concepts of idolatry, partly based on the common wisdom of his day, and partly based on his own empirical understanding of homosexuality's nature and consequences. In regard to the latter, he looked at the Gentile world and saw idolatry but also saw homosexual practices and the prevalence of venereal disease—and he linked them firmly together. As Bartlett comments, to be genuinely "Pauline" in our understanding of homosexual practices today, we would have to demonstrate that there does indeed exist a clear connection between idolatry and homosexual acts—and then one would wonder, given the widespread idolatry of our times, why more people had not been so "punished." In addition, a Pauline methodology would have us discuss homosexuality today with our best biblical interpretation, our best common wisdom of the contemporary day, and the best empirical understandings we can find. "If our understanding of homosexuality and our empirical perception of its nature and consequences have changed, then we will not be able to understand the issue precisely as Paul did, even if we share Paul's reverence for the Old Testa-

tion before me; so I swept them away; as you have seen" (Ezekiel 16:49-50). The other Old Testament references to Sodom's sin are similar (cf. Isaiah 13:19; Jeremiah 49:18, 50:40), and the identification of Sodom with inhospitality is made by Jesus as well (Luke 10:10-13). It was not until several centuries after it was written that the Sodom story was given a dominantly sexual interpretation—in the intertestamental Book of Jubilees and then in two late New Testament texts (2 Peter 2:4-10 and Jude 6-7). But if Sodom had consistently been understood as the major symbol of divine judgment on homosexual acts, we would expect that the other biblical references to such acts would also mention Sodom and its fate. None does.

Though there is considerable agreement among scholars that the basic ethical theme of the Sodom account is that of justice and its basic theological theme is God's righteousness in the face of social guilt, we can still acknowledge the possibility that homosexual acts did play some role in the story.⁷ If the verb "to know" does signify homosexual intercourse, it is also patently clear that what is being threatened here is homosexual *rape*. Moreover, the men of Sodom have threatened to rape the two visiting *angels*, and since the angels represent Yahweh's presence there is a direct sin against God here portrayed. In all fairness to the text, it is extremely difficult to construe this account as a judgment against *all* homosexual activity.

Fr. John McNeill writes a fitting conclusion to our brief look at the Sodom story. Observing that its dominant use in Christianity may well be one of the supreme ironies of history, he says: "For thousands of years in the Christian West the homosexual has been the victim of inhospitable treatment. Condemned by the Church, he has been the victim of persecution, torture, and even death. In the name of a mistaken understanding of Sodom and Gomorrah, the true crime of Sodom and Gomorrah has been and continues to be repeated every day."⁸

If the dominant homosexual interpretation traditionally given to the Sodom account fails to stand up to critical examination, there are, nevertheless, several other Old Testament passages which unmistakably condemn homosexual acts. It is crucial to see in these, however, that the pervasive theme is that of cultic defilement and idolatry. There is no general condemnation of same-sex *orientation*

(a notion foreign to the writers), nor is there any reference to genital *love* between gay persons who are committed to each other. What is clear is that sacral male prostitution is anathematized, for it involves the cultic worship of foreign gods and denies Yahweh's exclusive claim (see Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46).

Cultic defilement is also the context for the Holiness Code in Leviticus (see 18:22 and 20:13).⁹ Canaanite fertility worship involved sacral prostitution and sexual orgies, and this constituted a direct threat to Yahweh's exclusive claim. For Yahweh was the One who worked through the freedom of human history and not, primarily, through the cycles of biological life. If so, sexuality was not to be seen as a mysterious sacred power, but rather as part of human life to be used responsibly in gratitude to the Creator—a basic perspective of continuing relevance.

For those who do not accept this as the more appropriate interpretation of the Leviticus references, some exceedingly difficult issues of biblical interpretation emerge.¹⁰ What is the principle of selection by which cultic injunctions against homosexual acts are held valid today but at the same time most other parts of the Holiness Code are deemed irrelevant? Should the death penalty be used against male homosexuals as the law stipulates? Why are female same-sex acts unmentioned? What is the link between female subordination and the fear of male homosexuality, both evident in these laws? And how shall a church which grounds its life in the grace of Jesus Christ deal with the law codes of ancient Israel?

Part of the Old Testament context for this issue, worthy of note, was a common Middle East practice in that day: the submission of captured male foes to anal rape. It was an expression of domination and contempt, a powerful symbol of scorn in societies where the dignity of the male was held in such high esteem. Here a man was using another *man* as he might use a woman. As long as homosexual activity of any sort had this connection, it is not difficult to understand some of these texts.

Nevertheless, at a number of points in the Old Testament there are beautiful affirmations of same-sex *love*. Two notable examples come to mind. David's love for Jonathan was said to exceed his love for women. And the relationship of Ruth and Naomi can only

awareness of the cultural relativity in which we ourselves are immersed, and through which we perceive and experience what Christian faith means. Finally, our scriptural interpretation should be informed by the revelations of God's truth in other disciplines of human inquiry.

Nowhere does the Bible say anything about homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Its references to the subject are—without exception—statements about certain kinds of homosexual acts. Our understanding of homosexuality as a psychosexual orientation is a relatively recent development. It is crucial to remember this, for in all probability the biblical writers in each instance were speaking of homosexual acts undertaken by persons whom the authors presumed to be heterosexually constituted.⁵

Even though it does not deal with homosexual activity, it is well to begin with the Onan story (Genesis 38:1-11), for it has significantly influenced attitudes toward this subject. Onan's refusal to impregnate his widowed sister-in-law—a refusal expressed through his deliberate withdrawal before ejaculation (*coitus interruptus*)—was seen by the writer as so serious a violation of divine decree that Onan was killed by Yahweh.

Three interpretive observations are particularly relevant to the subject of homosexuality. First, the Onan story clearly points up the strong emphasis upon procreation which is characteristic of the Hebrew interpretation of sexuality. The historical context is one in which a small tribe was struggling for its very survival, and thus the reproduction of children was of exceptional importance. Any sexual activity that "wasted the seed" was a threat to the tribe. Our own situation on an overcrowded planet is markedly different.

The second observation is linked to this, and I repeat this point made in earlier chapters. The Onan story illustrates a biological misunderstanding which is present throughout the Bible. The prescientific mind (particularly the prescientific *male* mind) assumed that the man's semen contained the whole of nascent life. With no knowledge of eggs and ovulation, it was assumed that the woman provided only the incubating space. Hence, the deliberate and non-procreative spilling of semen was equivalent to the deliberate destruction of human life. Whether it occurred in *coitus interruptus* (as with Onan), or in male homosexual acts, or for that matter in

male masturbation, the deserved judgment was as severe as that for abortion or even murder.

The third observation follows: male homosexual and masturbatory acts have been condemned far more vigorously than have similar female acts throughout the whole sweep of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The sexism endemic to a patriarchal society ironically bore with its logic a heavier burden upon the "deviants" of the "superior" gender. But the central irony of the Onan story interpretation through the centuries is this: its major point does not concern sexual sin as such but rather has to do with human greed (over property inheritance) and with the disobedience of God's commands.

However, it is another Genesis account which has emerged as the chief text in Christian history for the summary condemnation of homosexuality: Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29). Traditional explanation has held that the destruction of the two cities is the positive sign of God's utter disapproval of homosexuality. Yet, there are compelling reasons to doubt the accuracy of this interpretation. Current Old Testament scholarship generally holds that the story's *major* themes are the affront to God's will in the breach of ancient Hebrew hospitality norms and persistent violations of rudimentary social justice.⁶

There are multiple reasons for preferring the latter interpretation. For one, some scholars doubt that the verb "to know" (*yādāh*) in this story refers to sexual intercourse. More probably it means the crowd's rude insistence upon *knowing who* these two strangers were. Lot, in their eyes, was not properly qualified to offer hospitality to strangers inasmuch as he himself was an outsider, a resident alien in Sodom.

That inhospitality and injustice coming from the mob and generally characterizing the community were "the sin of Sodom" is plausible when one examines parallel scriptural accounts (e.g., the crime of Gibeah, Judges 19:1-21:25). Even weightier evidence comes from subsequent Old Testament references to Sodom, none of which identifies homosexuality with that city. Ezekiel is typical: "Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters lived in pride, plenty, and thoughtless ease; they supported not the poor and needy; they grew haughty, and committed abomina-

Gayness and Homosexuality: Issues for the Church

THE GAY CAUCUSES now active in virtually every major American denomination no longer will let any of us forget that the church must face this issue more openly, honestly, and sensitively than it has yet done.¹ Beyond the legitimate pressure which the caucuses are exerting, there are numerous compelling reasons for the church to reexamine its theology and practice.² Among them are these:

- Gay Christians are sisters and brothers of every other Christian, and a great many are earnestly seeking the church's full acceptance of them—without prejudgment on the basis of sexual orientation.
- While antihomosexual bias has long existed in Western culture generally, the church must take responsibility for its significant share in shaping, supporting, and transmitting negative (and often hostile) attitudes toward gay people.
- The Christian mandate to seek social justice will not let us forget that discrimination continues against millions of gay people

in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, basic civil liberties—and in church structures.³

- The church must do its ongoing theological and ethical work with a high sense of responsibility. Fresh insights from gay Christians, from feminist theologians, and from those secular scholars who frequently manifest God's "common grace" in the world remind us of the numerous ways our particular sexual conditionings have colored our perceptions of God's nature and presence among us. If the Protestant Principle warns us against absolutizing historically relative theological and ethical judgments, so also an openness to continuing revelation should convince us (as it did some of our ancestors-in-faith) that "the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth."

- Finally, the heterosexually-oriented majority in the church has an immense amount to gain from a deeper grappling with this issue and a deeper encounter with gay Christians: an enriched capacity to love other human beings more fully and less fearfully, and a more faithful response to God's will for social justice.

The Bible and Homosexuality

It is a curious but unmistakable phenomenon that a great many Christians treat so literally the references to homosexual practice in the Bible, while at the same time they interpret biblical texts on almost every other topic with considerable flexibility and non-literalness. Why this may be so is an important question, and we shall return to it later. But at this point the major texts which mention the subject engage our attention.

A brief survey of these passages needs to be prefaced with a word about interpretive principles.⁴ Let me suggest four. First and most fundamental, Jesus Christ is the bearer of God's invitation to human wholeness and communion. Jesus Christ is the focal point of God's humanizing action, and hence he is the central norm through which and by which everything else in Scripture should be judged. Second, the interpreter must take seriously both the historical context of the biblical writers and our present cultural situation. Third, we should study and interpret the Bible with

THE MORALITY OF SEXUAL VARIATIONS:

Martin Porter, Leader

Because of so many areas of subjects covered in this chapter, references will be made to various matters in the chapter by page number (s) to be referred to when necessary including any Bible quotations that apply to areas of study and discussion.

- I. Unmarried persons face three main age old problems against premarital intercourse:
 - a. fear of pregnancy
 - b. Veneral and other diseases
 - c. religious disapproval
- II. Present times have shown little change except changes in attitude that show the following:
 - a. Scriptural direction with some ambiguities "Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery".
 - b. Sexual variations do not always apply to the unmarried.
 - c. What about prostitution? The Apostle Paul condemns such as in 1 Corinthians 6:16 - 20.
- III. Reserving intercourse to married persons only has special problems:
 - a. It absolutizes marriage and cuts off from any and all other forms of sexual expressions.
 - b. Does it make for happier more desirable and fulfilling marriages? (In my opinion - not necessarily) (155)
 - c. Are all types of sexual expressions valid one to the other? Are some more valid than others?
 - d. Should pro-creation be the only valid reason for sexual intercourse?
- IV. Some valid varieties of sexual variations include the three basics: heterosexual, homosexual and bi-sexual and may include the following:
 - a. Petting (to a climax) for sexual release.
 - b. Conception without possible penetration of the penis.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

REPORT OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF THE
BUREAU OF CHEMISTRY

FOR THE YEAR
1900

CHICAGO, ILL.,
1901

PRINTED BY THE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

REPORT OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF THE
BUREAU OF CHEMISTRY

FOR THE YEAR
1900

CHICAGO, ILL.,
1901

PRINTED BY THE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

REPORT OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF THE
BUREAU OF CHEMISTRY

FOR THE YEAR
1900

CHICAGO, ILL.,
1901

- c. tonguing (can be very erotic) (my addition)
- d. caressing and fondling.
- e. pre-marital explorations and curiosity (156)
- f. The "69" method - applies to both sexes (my addition)
- g. Muff diving - male to female and female to female. The male term often referred to as "Bush queen". (my addition)
- h. complete or total body sexuality (everything goes!) (156)
- i. heavy kissing especially French style can be extremely erotic and pleasureable. (my addition)
- j. "Fun" or "Recreational" sex (157)
- k. "Relationship sex" (158) "committment to each other".
- l. Masturbation - both male and female (168)
- m. Oral-genital and anal intercourse (173) (175)
- n. Sado-Masochism (S & M) (177)
- o. Erotic and pornographic literature, pictures, films, art, photography, magazines, etc. (163)
- p. "Leather eroticism"
- q. Sexual Fantasies (160)
- r. "Wet Dreams". (my addition)

V. Questions:

- a. Why the difference between sexual variations (man) and deviations (Church)? (159)
- b. What is considered the normal sexual aim of the Church and Society? (159-160)
- c. Should man always be the agresor and the woman passive? This has been the basic male view over the years BUT it is slowly changing, why?

VI. SEXUAL FANTASY:

- a. A common part of our lives (160)
- b. Usually stems from unmet sexual desires.
- c. When sexual desire are met in a person it usually gives

1. The year 1947 was a very important year for the Chinese people.
2. The year 1947 was a year of great struggle and sacrifice.
3. The year 1947 was a year of great achievement and progress.
4. The year 1947 was a year of great hope and optimism.
5. The year 1947 was a year of great unity and solidarity.
6. The year 1947 was a year of great courage and bravery.
7. The year 1947 was a year of great wisdom and insight.
8. The year 1947 was a year of great strength and power.
9. The year 1947 was a year of great glory and honor.
10. The year 1947 was a year of great love and compassion.
11. The year 1947 was a year of great peace and harmony.
12. The year 1947 was a year of great justice and fairness.
13. The year 1947 was a year of great truth and honesty.
14. The year 1947 was a year of great beauty and grace.
15. The year 1947 was a year of great goodness and kindness.
16. The year 1947 was a year of great nobility and dignity.
17. The year 1947 was a year of great greatness and majesty.
18. The year 1947 was a year of great glory and honor.
19. The year 1947 was a year of great love and compassion.
20. The year 1947 was a year of great peace and harmony.

VI. The Year of the "Great Leap Forward"

1. The year 1958 was a year of great struggle and sacrifice.
2. The year 1958 was a year of great achievement and progress.
3. The year 1958 was a year of great hope and optimism.
4. The year 1958 was a year of great unity and solidarity.
5. The year 1958 was a year of great courage and bravery.
6. The year 1958 was a year of great wisdom and insight.
7. The year 1958 was a year of great strength and power.
8. The year 1958 was a year of great glory and honor.
9. The year 1958 was a year of great love and compassion.
10. The year 1958 was a year of great peace and harmony.
11. The year 1958 was a year of great justice and fairness.
12. The year 1958 was a year of great truth and honesty.
13. The year 1958 was a year of great beauty and grace.
14. The year 1958 was a year of great goodness and kindness.
15. The year 1958 was a year of great nobility and dignity.
16. The year 1958 was a year of great greatness and majesty.
17. The year 1958 was a year of great glory and honor.
18. The year 1958 was a year of great love and compassion.
19. The year 1958 was a year of great peace and harmony.
20. The year 1958 was a year of great justice and fairness.

VII. The Year of the "Great Leap Forward"

1. The year 1959 was a year of great struggle and sacrifice.
2. The year 1959 was a year of great achievement and progress.
3. The year 1959 was a year of great hope and optimism.
4. The year 1959 was a year of great unity and solidarity.
5. The year 1959 was a year of great courage and bravery.
6. The year 1959 was a year of great wisdom and insight.
7. The year 1959 was a year of great strength and power.
8. The year 1959 was a year of great glory and honor.
9. The year 1959 was a year of great love and compassion.
10. The year 1959 was a year of great peace and harmony.
11. The year 1959 was a year of great justice and fairness.
12. The year 1959 was a year of great truth and honesty.
13. The year 1959 was a year of great beauty and grace.
14. The year 1959 was a year of great goodness and kindness.
15. The year 1959 was a year of great nobility and dignity.
16. The year 1959 was a year of great greatness and majesty.
17. The year 1959 was a year of great glory and honor.
18. The year 1959 was a year of great love and compassion.
19. The year 1959 was a year of great peace and harmony.
20. The year 1959 was a year of great justice and fairness.

perfect sexual harmony which will usher in happiness to all other areas of life. (161)

- d. Cuts loose all of life's demands for perfection.
- e. Offers escape from reality.

Question: What is the corelation between sexual fantasy and Matthew 5:28?

- f. It is common for most to fantasize about sex with someone else and still pledge our commitment to each other. Do you agree? (162)
- g. By accepting these feelings of fantasy as part of the reality of who we really are seems most possible and probable!
- h. Sexuality does permeate all of our relationships.
- i. Recognition of the difference between desire and need, thought and action, and know we are responsible for our actions especially if they contribute to genuine human needs and wholeness.
- j. Recognize that even some harmful sexual fantasies sometimes become instruments of our healing through delight and play. (163)

VII. EROTIC AND PORNOGRAPHIC LITERATURE -

- a. Linked to either distinct human activity with the full range of human feelings or depicted as an activity of Lust and dehumanizing over others and ourselves also.
- b. Pornography comes from Greek "Whore-writing" or the discriptions of whore activities usually geared to male sexual pleasures.
- c. Degrades women as used for male pleasure only. (163)
- d. Acts as a form of regression in many persons of both sexes.
- e. Cult of Pornography satisfies to some degree the perverse or infantile needs of repressed people who do not feel accepted (male and female.)
- f. Pornography offers a kind of elaborate compensation for male and female insecurity:
 - 1. Deals with illicit sex.
 - 2. becomes erotic and exciting.

3. useful solution against usual conventional moral posture or generally accepted sexual forms.
4. Easier and safer than acting out the desires.
5. Acts as a safeguard against dominance and aggression in relationships in-the-flesh!

Pornography not always pureveyors of sexual violence although claims are made to this effect.

1. Sex criminals (rapists, child molesters, etc) usually tend to see less pornography during adolescence than most average persons. Most violent sex criminals tend to come from sexually repressive families. (164-165)
2. Masturbation seems quickest way out of tensed up sexually repressive individuals and often only way of release next to sexual contact.
3. Regular sex partner a necessity as another means to sexual fulfillment.
4. Erotica does not seem a major stimulus for anti-social sexual behavior in potential sex offenders or offenses. (165-166)

VIII. THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE USE OF PORNOGRAPHY -

- A. What does it communicate to user?
 1. major appeal to men.
 2. appeals to human needs.
 3. treats women as whores to be purchased by men whose sexual satisfaction is somewhat limited or restricted although not always.
 4. Our society of dualism "ordinary" women represent sexual inhibition and whores represent sexual fulfillment.
 5. Man is split in two:
 - a. Body - immoral, non-respectable animal!
 - b. Spirit - moral respectable citizen.
 6. Man is able to uphold the purity of "his" woman and vent his animalistic desires onto the "others".

- a. Defense mechanism against their wholeness is dualistically threatened.
7. Women stake their claim on Pornography more today than ever before. No longer a male-dominated area.
 - a. split themselves in two (under male pressure.)
 - b. Good Woman (feminine, wife, mother, etc.)
 - c. Unconscious libertine (finds her symbol in pornography representing those women who act out what the respectable woman does not.)
8. Pornography has appeal because it promises to relieve (even momentarily) the dualistic alienation felt within.
 - a. May be negative sign of health but important. (167)
 - b. But it cannot heal!
 - c. exaggerated representation of the very dualisms which require cure.
 - d. Cannot make blanket judgements about morality of erotica.
 - e. For some people, a necessary good and for others, a necessary evil.
 - f. Pornography could be morally revelant depending on the user and intents because of its deep personal involvements. One must use own judgement carefully about this.
 - g. Pornography/Erotica can be useful and good if it portrays human good BUT wrong if its promises are false and misleading.

IX. MASTURBATION -

1. Most widely practiced genital expression of all ages and groups.
2. Least understood and most guilt-ridden.
3. Worse than being a communist, Christian, Illegitimate, etc, that one practices this to climax. (168) (Gen 38: 6-10)
4. Bible does not directly address issue of Masturbation. However the Church has over the years conditioned itself to place Masturbation in the SIN category and against the Biblical injunction of pre-creation, they say.

5. Deliberate destruction of life - pre-formed people - was present in the semen?
6. Under Jewish Law the death penalty could be used against Male masturbator. (168)

Centuries later medical personnel said such practices as masturbation could cause;

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| a. convulsions | l. gonorrhea |
| b. paralysis | m. uterine hemorrhage |
| c. epilepsy | n. tuberculosis |
| d. feeble-mindedness | o. schizophrenia |
| e. impotence | p. heart attacks |
| f. bladder disorders | q. blindness |
| g. pimples | r. cancer |
| h. suicide | s. hypertension |
| i. falling hair | t. mental retardation |
| j. weak eyes | u. physical retardation |
| k. stooped shoulders | v. high blood pressure |

7. Modern medical practices refute the above.
8. The Roman Catholic Church wielded much influence against masturbation as sinful and more serious than: (169)
 - a. adultery
 - b. fornication
 - c. rape

Statement: The Roman Catholic Church states that masturbation among other things goes against pro-creation, mutual self-giving, lacks true love in its intent. (170)

However, more modern Christians both Catholic, Protestant and in-between take the stand that masturbation may have some valid expressions, not always bad or sinful in nature. (170)

9. Current thought in medical profession, literature, art, etc, say the following:
 - a. an outlet for forbidden or repressed desires.
 - b. consolation to the lonely person.
 - c. feelings of reassurance to the weak.
 - d. outlet for married persons having mental, physical or medical problems, both parties, either way too!
 - e. Is pleasureable, comforting, adventuresome and entertaining. (170)
 - f. compensates for absent partner.
 - g. unifying factor in relationships (as many people masturbate in one form or another) either married or single couples.
 - h. found to be prevalent in young people (adolescence) especially for curiosity sake, independence. (171)
 - i. not treated today as "forbidden fruit" as in the past.
 - j. the self can be lover and beloved at the same time, (172)
 - k. has some value in marriage and other relationships.
 - l. sometimes used in selfish ways (punishment of mate.)

Question: What has masturbation done to the celebrate life?

Do you find it necessary in relationships or single?

What was the real problem found in the Biblical scripture of Sodom and Gomorrah? (Gen 13:1-13)

X. ORAL-GENITAL SEXUAL EXPRESSION -

1. Increasing greatly in our society, in all age groups except elderly.
 - a. exciting because it is classified basically as the "Forbidden Fruit".
 - b. laws against it appear on the books in many states even in married couples.
 - c. Basic Christian (Church) teachings against it on the grounds it is anti-pro-creative. (174)

2. Some meanings to Oran-Genital Sexual practices:
 - a. heterosexual fellatio finds something stimulating about the penis in the mouth, opposed to vagina.
 - b. area of male domination especially in homosexual acts.
 - c. heterosexual relationships find female in passive state.
 - d. taboos against these forms of sexual practices seems to give rise to them in present day society. (Keep off Grass - is invitation to step on grass.)
 - e. both fellatio and cunnilingus have special attraction especially under any taboos and have special excitement to both persons.
 1. found to be outside normal sexual approval of family, church, state, etc. This gives it the daring in going against the norms of accepted sexual approvals.
 2. can be found as ritual to acting out repressed desires which can very much be "a healing balm".
 - f. takes care of most sexual alienations in us all.

XI. ANAL INTERCOURSE -

1. anal heterosexual intercourse not as widely practiced as we might perceive.
 - a. biologically not a good practice as against the coitus.
 - b. taboos against this form stronger than any other taboos against oral-genital intercourse-sex. (175)
 - c. mainly because of taboos and lack of evidence from the medical profession (to its dangers) it is increasing in our society.
 - d. accents the meaning of male dominance and female submission-sometimes at request of the female too!
 - e. sometimes used to avoid pregnancy without using contraceptives of any kind.
 - f. Practiced by many homosexuals (male/male)
 - g. done at times to accentuate the chaos in our lives as against order, cleanliness and virtue symbolized bodily. (176)

Question: What are significances in Christian and Society of above?

XII. SADO-MASOCHISM -

1. Main means of giving and receiving of physical pain as a means to sexual pleasure. (177)
 - a. simple things like pinching, love bite! sexual teasing, etc, are small starts of the S&M syndrome.
2. Gradual move into uses of bondage and flagellation are increasing in our society.
 - a. the leather set (male & female) usually enter into the S & M in a big way.
 - b. has some suspect as to just how much S&M is to sexual fulfillment.
 - c. however certain individuals do get sexual release through heavy S & M. Wildness in sexual desires play a major role here for some persons.
3. Sometimes more than normal usual sex is not excitement enough to give sexual (climaxual) release.
 - a. requires the addition of some physical pain (in various personal methods) for release.
 - b. exaggerated sex roles are prominent and played out in its rituals.
 - c. TV violence sometimes contribute to S & M.
 - d. most people have some desire, no matter how small, for some pain in their pleasure receiving and giving for sexual release.
4. Christian history and symbolism are important and ample:
 - a. torturing of witches
 - b. Roman Catholic Church silence on self-flagellation of the body as repentance for Sin. Practiced by some poor nations with Catholic majority and not opposed by Church leaders. Why?

XII. SEXUAL VARIATIONS AND MORAL JUDGEMENTS -

1. Some meanings of sexual expressions call for healing and Wholeness. Others call for underscoring the problems.
 - a. neither moralism or sentimentalism are of much help in these matters.

- b. exclusion of community support and understanding compounds the problem.
- 2. Christian liberty (Romans 14:14) by Apostle Paul "Nothing is unclean".
 - a. Some wisdom of and from society can be found regarding threats to our human becoming!

We are body people by God's design and human bodies are made for play and exploration - "An adventure of tenderness and exploration into the potential of pleasure is hidden in our need for love".

The ... of the ... and the ...

The ... of the ... and the ...

The ... of the ... and the ...

The ... of the ... and the ...

The Sexually Disenfranchised

Chapter 9 of Embodiment by James B. Nelson

Many of the physically handicapped, the seriously ill, the aging, and the mentally retarded are limited in their sexual expression because of the social attitudes about them. Often these attitudes are based on myths perpetuated by ignorance or fear. One of these myths is that "if the mind or body is enfeebled, then the desire and capacity for physical expression must be enfeebled also." Besides discouraging a person's sexual desires, this attitude has the additional crushing effect of dehumanizing the person. It is a process that takes place when they are desexed by society. Who needs to have a trip like that laid on them?

Another myth takes the opposite stance and states that "such a person must be a pervert with excessive sexual needs." And then the perpetrators, and those they can influence, shun these people who need that social contact the most.

If others are charged with the care of the physically or mentally enfeebled, it can be especially frustrating for the patient, for it is rare that a patient's sexuality is given any respect whatsoever. Conjugal visits are starting to be allowed in prisons, but have you ever heard of it being allowed in a hospital, nursing home, rehabilitation center or home for the aged? I have not. A closed door to a bedroom in an institution is an immediate cause for alarm, investigation, and a reciting of the rules and regulations. And yet the results of sexual deprivation is the loss of an important means for reducing tension. For many physically handicapped, it is the only effective means - besides screaming, which generally brings negative consequences. For the critically ill it is of major importance. For many it is more than just a release of tension that is needed. The will to live will not be strong enough unless there is some incentive to stay alive. And when you are bored, lonely, uncomfortable, and feeling that you have nothing to look forward to in life, depression, exhaustion, and giving up soon follow.

When an elderly heterosexual couple must move into a home for the aged they are split up - with the husband put in one part of the building, and the wife placed elsewhere. Now really, is that necessary? I would like to hear from those of you that have experience in the rest home environment to learn of the problems that would have to be overcome to make it feasible for the elderly to stay together. I have the conviction that the effort to overcome the problems would be well worth the results.

If there is any doubt in your mind of the desire of the elderly to stay together, I submit to you the article in the Parade section of the Boston Sunday Globe for November 1, 1981 by Earl Ubell.

When the concern of the personnel in charge of mentally ill patients is focussed on "how to stop masturbation", one can see that the problem being faced is an attitudinal one. Take away

Boston Sunday Globe

parade

**GOOD
NEWS
ABOUT
LIFE,
LOVE
AND
SEX**

**by
Earl
Ubell**



PRESIDENT'S CLOTHES
Marvin Scott

Her face is lined, her hair white, her hands veined and bony. His features show the years of work, of children brought to adulthood, even of tragedy. Both of them are in their 70s.

But their walk has a snap as they stroll down the street, backs straight. Their eyes sparkle when you talk to them, and they are more ready to smile than to grouse. Almost unconsciously, she grasps his upper arm. And if he thinks nobody is looking, he will let his hand slide slowly down her back.

Shocking? Only to those people who think that sexual activity among the elderly is ridiculous. Yet science is finding that as people get older, the majority seek and need sex as much as, and sometimes more than, young people. In fact, if older people stop having sex, it is mostly because they are physically sick or they have nobody willing to share intimacy with them.

Society at large shames many oldersters for their sexual longings. Dr. Eric Pfeiffer—professor of psychiatry and director of the Sun Coast Gerontology Center, University of South Florida—says that society places “a continuing taboo regarding sexual expression in old age.” And this is happening in an era that is open to sex activity at all other ages.

There is an important minority of older men who have simply grown apathetic about sex. They don’t care. Dr. Clyde E. Martin of the National Institute on Aging in Baltimore, who was a collaborator of 1950s sex researcher Alfred C. Kinsey, studied such men. “They no longer seem able to be aroused by seeing women,” says Martin. “They go for long periods without sex appetite. It could be caused by some change that age brings to the nervous system.”

However, every survey shows that the vast majority like sex, want to have it and are sexually active. A 1980 study of 800 men and women over 60—by Drs. Bernard D. Starr and Marcella Bakur Weiner, psychologists at Brooklyn College in New York—revealed that 96 percent like sex and 80 percent still have sexual relations. Of those in their 80s, two out of five still have sex.

Nevertheless, despite the evidence for continuing interest, more and more people abstain from sex in each decade of life. For men, impotence plays a big role—they simply can no longer become aroused. For women, opportunities disappear. Because women live eight years longer than men on the average, they soon outnumber men, which compounds their difficulties. Of every 10 older women, studies show, six have no mates; but of every 10 older men, only two are unmarried. Men, therefore, have the



Harry and Bertha Friedman of Delray Beach. The physical side of their life together, they s

team)
(three
Cham-
on 12

chance to be much more active sexually than women.

Most experts believe that if there were equal numbers of men and women, women would be the more active sex. “Women’s sex drive continues to grow until they reach their 30s and remains the same throughout their lives,” says Dr. Carol C. Flax, a New York City sex therapist. “For men, drive reaches a peak at 19 and then goes down, eventually disappearing for many.”

Experts argue over whether to blame the decline in men on social or physical causes. Most agree that many older men who no longer seek sexual activity are in fact sexually potent and have just given up because they cannot perform as they did in their youth. Young men are quickly aroused, remain aroused and are aroused again quickly. As they grow older, many men believe they have lost potency because events go more slowly. They refuse to adapt.

In general, what you did sexually at 30 governs what you will do at 70. Dr. Mary Calderone—President of the Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) and one of the world’s leading sexologists—says it is not true that you are born with a certain amount of sex capacity, which you can use up if you are too active in youth. “The more you use it,” Calderone says, “the less you lose it—and that’s not true of any bank account I’ve ever heard of.” In other words, you can’t save it for your old age. Men and women who start sex early and perform frequently do so into their later years.

As people get older, however, many physical and mental conditions interfere with sex. They include:

Diabetes: In men, diabetes destroys the nerves that support erection.

High blood pressure: The medicines used to control blood pressure can depress a man’s sexual potency.

Depression: It can cause a lack of sex interest. And, often, the drugs used to treat it reduce sex drive more.

Alcohol: Too much booze depletes sexual interest.

Menopause: The reduction of female hormones during “change of life” dries out the sex organs and makes sex painful.

Prostate gland: Although an enlarged prostate may be uncomfortable, it does not directly affect potency. However, some prostate operations can eliminate a man’s ability to have an erection.

Heart: There is no reason why people with heart trouble can’t have sex. But the doctor is the best judge of how much and when. One study showed that 27 out of 34 men who died of heart attacks during sex were *not* with their wives. Too exciting.

If a man has an erection in the morning or during sleep, then no matter what

his age
tions. I
laborat
during
older n
physica
longer
appreci

As w
ing sex
ner. Bo
love. M
spond t
and wo
someon
ical act
way, mo
The elo
more.

Many
each oth
lectually
alive, ex

V

Perhaps n

sexually
here were
men, wom-
x. "Wom-
row until
nains the
says Dr.
City sex
es a peak
ventually
to blame
physical
der men
ivity are
have just
perform-
ing men
used and
ey grow
have lost
e slowly.
ually at
t 70. Dr.
the Sex
ouncil of
e world's
not true
amount
use up if
he more
the less
e of any
of." In
for your
start sex
so into
r, many
nterfere
destroys
edicines
can de-
k of sex
used to
lepletes
female
e" dries
painful.
nlarged
it does
wever,
minate
on.
y peo-
ve sex.
of how
ed that
f heart
th their
morn-
er what

his age, he is capable of sexual relations. In many medical centers, sleep laboratories measure sex-organ response during sleep. In the sex act, however, an older man may require more and longer physical stimulation. And it may take longer to achieve climax, a fact often appreciated by his partner.

As with women, older men stop having sex if they lack an interested partner. Both need someone to touch and to love. More than young people, they respond to cuddling, touching, perfumes and words of endearment. If there is someone around who is caring, the physical act follows. Older people are, in a way, more romantic than younger ones. The elderly seek and value intimacy more.

Many married couples get bored with each other not only sexually but intellectually and emotionally. To keep sex alive, experts say, it is important to find

not only new things to do in bed, but new things to think about and to be concerned with. If you want to find out if you can revive flagging sex in a marriage, ask yourself these questions:

(1) Am I willing to *think* about doing something sexual with my spouse that I believe is improper, perhaps even shameful?

(2) Am I willing actually to *do* that act?

(3) Am I willing to *ask* my spouse to do it?

The more "yes" answers you gave, the greater the likelihood that you can spark your marital sex life. "Yes" answers indicate a taste for adventure and variety.

Society has placed a heavy burden on older people. Sex for them, we say, is unseemly. We have equated sexiness with youth—the body smooth, rounded and unlined in women; tight, rippling mus-

cles in men. Vigor equals virility. Old women are regarded as intrinsically ugly and unsexy, and old men are seen as repulsive. These attitudes make it all the more difficult for an older person to keep an interest in sex.

Moreover, says Dr. John F. O'Connor, a New York City psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of sexual problems, "in a culture that considers sexually interested older men as 'dirty old men' and sexually interested older women as ridiculous or pitiful—and all older people as generally worthless—high self-esteem is difficult to maintain." Which does no good for one's sex drive.

Some people with declining sexual interest may need help from a physician or a psychologist, and today there are increasing numbers of trained people who can help. Most treatment of people in their later years is psychological, because most of the problem is in the mind. Sometimes all a person needs is reassurance—namely, that it's OK to have sex when you're past 50, or past 60, or whatever age.

Sometimes a man or woman has only to be told that, at later ages, sex is no longer as automatic as it was in one's 20s and 30s, that it takes longer and requires more direct physical contact, more hugging and touching.

Dr. Flax tells the story of a couple in their 70s who were troubled about their decreased sex life. They were having intercourse only twice a week instead of the four times they enjoyed a decade earlier. Dr. Flax had only to point out to them that their loving relationship was more important than keeping score.

Sometimes older people—especially men—have to be retrained how to make love: that is, slowly, with a lot of touching and talking before coitus. And sometimes *just* touching and talking, without coitus.

Partners also may have to be trained how to relax. If they have failed at sex, they may be anxious, and the more anxious they are, the more they will fail.

There are physical treatments, too. For women past their menopause and whose genital organs may be dry and thin-walled, hormones can restore lost texture. Frequently, lubricants will turn the trick. When medicines are causing impotence in men, a doctor can change the prescription. For men who have had cancer operations or whose diabetes has destroyed potency, there are plastic implants to restore erectile power.

Sex for those getting older, the experts declare, is not only right and proper. It may be critical for their mental health. It should not be denied them. **P**

We have equated sexiness with youth,
which makes it all the more difficult for
an older person to keep an interest in sex



Perhaps more than the young, the elderly need the intimate touch that says "I care."

Earl Ubell, a longtime newspaper science editor, is health and science editor for WCBS-TV News in New York.

THE TASK OF THEOLOGIZING

Paul Tillich was a well-known and very influential theologian. His thoughts and writings captured our times, and he was able to express in very theologically bound ways a sense of our human condition.¹ His ideas have provided a handle for others in their human struggle.² His theology, I believe, illustrates the breadth of the theological task. One does not theologize in a vacuum, but the process of theologizing is one of integrating the various parts of our faith and our life. One way of looking at these parts, which when combined make a whole, is as follows: scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.³ This is not an easy task, but it is not impossible.

Nelson in Chapter 4 provides us some illustration of this process. Borrowing from Tillich's views of sin, Nelson equates salvation with the process of healing. For some of us this is a novel idea, for we usually think of healing from a physical or psychological point of view. Yet, here we find the term being used to express a theological point, and this is very intentional. What Nelson presents for our consideration is a view which is very wholistic oriented--thus issues of our faith, our identity, our intellect, our emotions, our spirituality, and our physical being are all interrelated. Sin, as alienation, can effect us in many diverse ways; so too, can the act of healing.

I would like to suggest for your reflection that what I have been describing above is the act of theologizing. I would like to further suggest that this method could provide us with a model. A model which we could use for our theologizing.

Endnotes

1. An interesting, yet not too long, presentation of Tillich's theological insight can be found in his The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1952. Tillich's grasp of the times we live in is well expressed.
2. Two interesting attempts at integrating Tillich's theology with the field of human behavior are The Mental Health Ministry of the Local Church by Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972) and The Structures of Awareness by Thomas C. Oden (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969).
3. A more detailed explanation of this perspective is found in "Our Theological Task" of The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 1980 (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1980), pp. 71-85.

Scripture

Tradition

Reason

Experience

Books were written from all kinds of perspectives. Some moralized and decried the sexual mess society had gotten itself into. Some called for a return to the old ways (and there are always those). Some called for a total throwing away of all standards, "If it feels good, do it." became a way of ethical life. More often the books made no suggestions, but asked questions and threw their figurative hands in the air, "What can we do?"

James Nelson wrote a book. It is a reasoned, well-investigated, well thought out book. It deals with not only **with** the questions, but it also provides some guidance in finding your own way. It does not give answers, but it gives guidelines for helping people find their own. It is not a morality essay. Most importantly it deals with our emotions as we try to find those answers, and it deals with the emotions of those who are not as secure as we are in dealing with questions of sexuality.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What do you think of the argument the church was presenting regarding Jesus having sexual encounters?
2. How would you define Jesus' sexuality? What evidence do you think is present in the Bible for Jesus' emotional relationships with women? with men?
3. What is sex? What is sexuality? What is gender or gender identity? What are some of the roles men and women play in our society? What are some of the roles men and women play in the gay community?
4. How has your own comfort/discomfort with yourself as a sexual being changed in the last few years?
5. Can religious faith be of assistance to you in helping you deal with yourself as a sexual being? If not, why not? If it can, how?
6. Are you comfortable in dealing with your own sexuality? Are you comfortable in hearing others talk about their sexuality? Are you able to help others deal with theirs? If not, are you willing to go ahead and see where Nelson and others lead?

EMBODIMENT

It is probably very forward for me to say that had Metropolitan Community Church not existed, Embodiment could not have been written, but I say that because we have spent over ten years calling the church to accountability for its attitude toward the sexuality of church people and the world at large. The church has avoided dealing with sexuality in large part, and the amount of sexual information it has been willing to share with most of its members has been negligibly positive and in most instances damaging.

Men in our society, with the church's connivance, have been taught that women were their property and they were permitted to do with them sexually what they pleased -- at whatever age. This has led to the abuse of girl children by their own parents, by the premature use of girl children by male members of the household, by a society whose rape statistics outnumber the rape statistics of societies which practice bride stealing in which rape is an important means of claiming a wife. We have permitted and even encouraged by approved of social means, the rape of elderly women ("Take an old woman to bed, she'll love you for it."). Men have been given the stamp of approval of the church to claim sexually whoever and whatever they choose.

On the other hand, women have been denied sexual freedom. Women have been chattelized, in some societies clitoridectomized to prevent their enjoying sexuality, been so poorly educated about their bodies that they did not even know that there was a seat of sexual pleasure other than the vagina, have been forbidden positions, procedures, and time during the sex act to enable sex to be pleasurable. And all of this has been fostered by the church at various times in order to control women's sexuality, so that the church had become a controlling arm of the state, which made it the watchdog over the lineages of its members to assure proper control of inheritance, property ownership, descent, and other legal matters which were legitimately outside the church's purview.

Gay people were outside that system. Gay women learned to pleasure each other in ways that were more suitable to the anatomy of females.

Gay men and women, in the natural order of things, could not conceive during the ordinary homosexual acts and sex became for them separated from the questions of inheritance and property transfer to progeny. It became a matter of pleasure without a price, and this has and does anger many church puritans. What then became ethical sexuality for people who were not tied into society's legal structure of procreation and the protection of property?

With the appearance of fairly trustworthy contraception devices, sex became possible for heterosexual couples with the same assurance that procreation was not swift and sure. With easy, certain and inexpensive legal abortion rights, the access to sex without the punitive aspects of childbearing, childrearing, and the law's involvement in property inheritance, a whole new theology of sex became apparent and necessary. For some it was called the "New Morality."

What is ethical behavior between two persons, neither of whom will have any far-reaching or punishing effects (that is effects lasting in some cases for 20 or more years) from innocent enjoyment of each other in sexual conduct. Was sex totally divorced from feeling, from relationship, from bonding, from mutual interdependence, from commitment, from covenantal relationships? A whole new series of questions arose.

The church had to look at sexuality in a different context, and over the past 30 years, at least, that context has been more and more open to relationships other than those based solely on procreation. If heterosexual couples could live together openly in non-procreative unions, purely because they enjoyed each other, what was so ill and evil about homosexual couples living together in equally non-procreative unions, and enjoying each other without the long nose of the state, the church, and the family looking down into their coverlets.

Society changed. Freud proposed that sexual energy and sexual "force" (power) was the power that fueled all ambition, personal drive and the desire to accomplish anything. The church recognized that Genesis may have been right, "It is not good for a person to be alone," and recognized that sexuality did more for a relationship than provide it with children.

The movement away from the status of women as chattel led to the education of women, and the involvement of women in professions previously closed to them. Sexuality became a science worthy of investigation and Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and a myriad of investigators like John Money, began to look at sexuality and sex as more than just what a man did to a woman and neither of them enjoyed very much. Gender questions arose. Is the sex to which you are biologically assigned important to your sexuality, or is there some other definition of who you are sexually? In other words, do all men feel like men just because they have a penis? Transsexuals became more able to speak out for themselves and raised interesting questions about gender. Does the person living in a body necessarily feel like he or she belongs to the sex that the body is assigned to? Homosexuals had interesting questions for society: "Suppose I don't want to have sex with a woman but with a man, but I don't want to be a woman -- am I effeminate (that is, have I taken on female characteristics, or the female role)? Are gender, roles, and sexuality the same thing, different things, or do they have nothing/something in common. What things are innate, what things are truly inborn and inherited, what things are socially taught, what are biologically governed, what are we talking about????

And we discovered we didn't know! We still don't know. And still very, very little money is being provided in order to find out. But something was going on in society, in the church, in families, within individuals. Sexuality was open, and real, and wasn't going to go away. Society would have to deal with people seeking gender reassignments, with homosexuals who demanded civil and personal rights, with consenting adults who refused to have the law or the church looking over their bedsteads, and heterosexuals (or others) refusing to bear unwanted children as the result of sexual conduct. The church finally had to face sexuality, and begin to look at its traditional ethical, moral, and biological teachings about the body, about relationships, about social interaction between men and women in a very changed society, and about the church's responsibility for what had gone before -- since its teachings were largely responsible for the guilt and anger and rage which many people felt as a result of having to deal with their own sexuality.

LOVE AND SEXUAL ETHICS

I. Sex as Language of Love

- A. Central to image of God in which we are created is the will to communion.
 - 1. Sexuality is not segment of life/center of response.
 - 2. Communion depends on communication, and human communication depends significantly on language.
 - a. Interpretation of EVERY sexual act.
 - b. Verbal language always contextual in operation
 - c. Immediacy of receptors:
touch versus sight

II. Toward the Integration of Sex and Love

- A. Conscious connection between sex and love is modern discovery
 - 1. Late Middle Ages added notion of romance which was not possible in marriage at that time. Cult of adultery. Christine of Pisa writes on wedded love. Francesco Barbara lauds romance of wedded sex, decrying family-arranged marriages. Courtly love opened up possibility of love's integration with sex on conscious level. Sex act is meaningful.
 - 2. Psychosexual intimacy is another recent dimension Only in the modern period have we had literature that has typically exposed the author's inner feelings and self-consciousness. "In modern times love becomes--for the first time in human history--the experience of psychological intimacy."
 - 3. Shakespeare helped with connection of love with sex. Puritans and Quakers believed that the primary purpose of marriage was communion, and likewise, the primary purpose of sexual expression was communion, not procreation.
 - 4. Because human consciousness is what it now is in our culture, even at those times when we refuse to affirm-it we are CAPABLE of affirming this: sex is intended to be a language of love.

III. The Meanings of Love

- A. Love is the central ethical norm for Christians.
- B. Love is both the process and reality of communion-it is

it is that relationship of reunion with God, with the creaturely neighbor, with the self.

C. Classic distinctions in speaking of love

1. Epithymia (libido) is the desire for sexual fulfillment
2. Philia is mutuality and friendship
3. Eros is aspiration and desire for the beloved
4. Agape is freely offered, self-giving love.
5. These aspects are all different dimensions of the rich unity of love--dimensions which can be disjointed only at the expense of serious distortion

- D. Nygren postulated opposition between divine love and human love, but Christian love transcends this because now divine love flows thru the human receptacle, a love which has nothing to do with desire, longing, and sexual fulfillment.

IV. Another Look at Self-Love

1. Self-acceptance is an important mark of sexual sanctification. Love is indivisible and nonquantifiable.
2. Self love is basic to personal fulfillment. True sexual intimacy depends on the solid sense of identity of each of partners. Sexual intimacy is communion of love, not unification. Such intimacy rests in some large measure upon each partner's own sense of worth as a person, each one's ability to be self-affirming.
3. Communion's dialectic of self-love and other love thus depends in no small measure upon self's growth toward androgyny. Animus-the self-asserting, Anima, the other embracing, the initiating and the receptive

V. Characteristics of Love

1. Love, involves commitment to the other, the willingness to risk and entrust oneself to the other. It is the desire to open the self in personal nakedness to the beloved. Another way of looking at sexual love is to observe the values which emerge from it. Such love is liberating, it expresses one's own authentic selfhood and thus releases further potential for growth.

VI. Components of Our Decisions about Sex-Related Issues

1. Ourselves as decision-makers.
2. Our basic religious beliefs.
3. Our styles of decision-making
4. Facts and how we interpret them.
5. Our norms and how we use them.
6. The church as moral community

VI. Some Principles for Sexual Morality

1. Love requires a single standard and not a double standard for sexual morality.
2. Physical expression of one's sexuality with another person ought to be appropriate to the level of loving commitment present in that relationship.
3. Genital sexual expression should be evaluated in regard to motivations, intentions, the nature of the act itself, and the consequences of the act, each of these informed and shaped by love.
 - a. Motive - Why should I do, not do this?
 - b. Intention - At what am I aiming in this act?
 - c. The Act - Are certain sexual acts inherently right and good, and certain others intrinsically wrong and bad?
 - d. Consequences - What most likely will result from this genital act, and in what ways am I willingly accountable?

1. *Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the variables X and Y. The study is based on a sample of 100 subjects.

The first part of the study is a literature review. This part will discuss the previous research on the topic and identify the gaps in the knowledge.

The second part of the study is a description of the subjects and the procedures used. This part will provide information about the sample and the methods used to collect the data.

The third part of the study is a description of the results. This part will present the data and the statistical analysis.

The fourth part of the study is a discussion of the results. This part will interpret the findings and discuss their implications.

The fifth part of the study is a conclusion. This part will summarize the main findings of the study and provide recommendations for future research.

The sixth part of the study is a list of references. This part will provide a list of the sources used in the study.

Appendix A

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15